



Class PZ3

Book F435 *le*

Copyright N^o le

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

LED ASTRAY;

OR,

"LA PETITE COMTESSE."

182
526

THE SPHINX;

OR,

"JULIA DE TRECŒUR."

"BELLAH."

BY OCTAVE FEUILLET,

Author of "THE ROMANCE OF A POOR YOUNG MAN."

Translated from the latest Paris Editions,

BY O. VIBEUR.



NEW YORK:

G. W. Carleton & Co., Publishers.

PARIS: MICHEL LEVY FRERES.

M.DCCC.LXXV.

PZ 3
F 435
We

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1875, by
G. W. CARLETON & CO.,
In the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

✓

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
PREFACE.....	7

I.

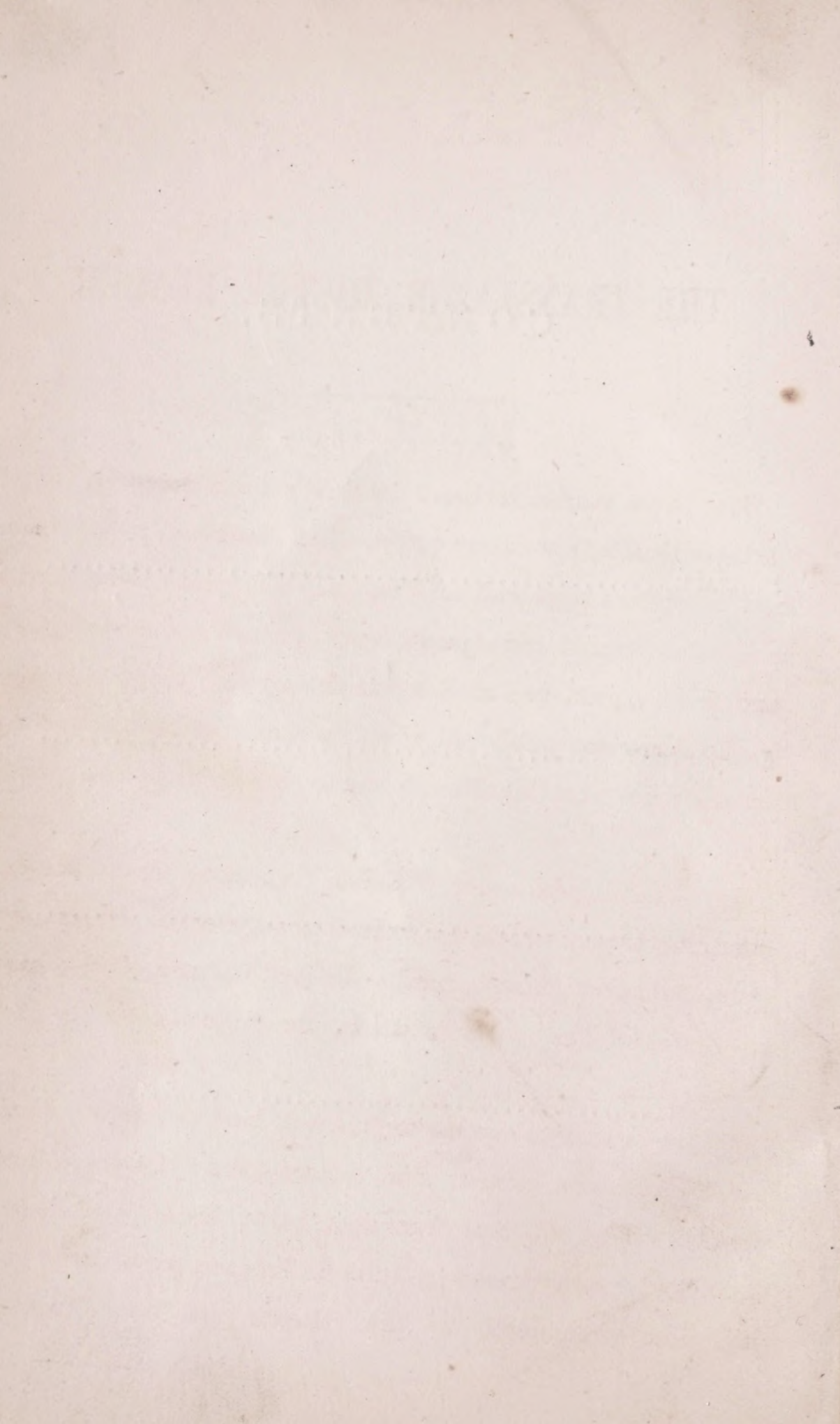
LED ASTRAY.....	9
-----------------	---

II.

THE SPHINX.....	109
-----------------	-----

III.

BELLAH.....	205
-------------	-----



THE TRANSLATOR TO THE READER.

THE three stories included in this volume comprise *all* of Octave Feuillet's writings (other than dramatic) which have not heretofore appeared in English. They each form in the original a distinct and separate work, printed and sold as such, and, in fact, published at different times ; they are now offered to the American public all three in one volume, thus giving for *one* price what the French reader has to pay three prices for.

In chronological order, "Bellah" appeared first. It is a charming story, which, for refined tone, elegant design, and pure, delicate sentiment, recalls the best features of that most successful of this author's works, the "Romance of a Poor Young Man."

Of the other two stories, the titles at least are already familiar to American readers and theatre-goers. They are both, though widely different from each other, keen psychological studies of female character, Julia de Trécœur particularly having been pronounced by the "Revue des Deux-Mondes"

(April, 1874), than which perhaps no higher critical authority exists, one of the subtlest and most delicate characterizations ever produced in a work of fiction.

O. VIBEUR.

NEW YORK, January, 1875.

LED ASTRAY;

OR,

“LA PETITE COMTESSE.”

I.

GEORGE L—— TO PAUL B., PARIS.

ROZEL, 15TH SEPTEMBER.

It's nine o'clock in the evening, my dear friend, and you have just arrived from Germany. They hand you my letter, the post-mark of which informs you at once that I am absent from Paris. You indulge in a gesture of annoyance, and call me a vagabond. Nevertheless, you settle down in your best arm-chair, you open my letter, and you hear that I have been for the past five days domesticated in a flour-mill in Lower Normandy. In a flour-mill! What the deuce can he be doing in a mill? A wrinkle appears on your forehead, your eyebrows are drawn together; you lay down my letter for a moment; you attempt to penetrate this mystery by the unaided power of your imagination. Suddenly a playful expression beams upon your countenance;

your mouth expresses the irony of a wise man tempered by the indulgence of a friend; you have caught a glimpse, through an opera-comique cloud, of a pretty miller's wife with powdered hair, a waist all trimmed with gay ribbons, a light and short skirt, and stockings with gilded clocks; in short, one of those fair young miller's wives whose heart goes pit-a-pat with hautboy accompaniment. But the Graces who are ever sporting in your mind sometimes lead it astray: my fair miller is as much like the creature of your imagination as I am like a youthful *Colin*; her head is adorned with a towering cotton nightcap to which the thickest possible coating of flour fails to restore its primitive color; she wears a coarse woollen petticoat which would abrade the hide of an elephant; in short, it frequently happens to me to confound the miller's wife with the miller himself, after which it is sufficient to add that I am not the least curious to know whether or not her heart goes pit-a-pat. The truth is, that, not knowing how to kill time in your absence, and having no reason to expect you to return before another month (it's your own fault!), I solicited a mission. The Council-General of the Department of —— had lately, and quite opportunely, expressed officially the wish that a certain ruined abbey, called Rozel Abbey, should be classed among historical monuments. I have been commissioned to investigate closely the candidate's titles. I hastened with all possible speed to the chief town of this *artistic* department, where I effected my entrance with the important gravity of a man who holds within his hands the life or the death of a monument dear to the country. I made some inquiries at the hotel; great was my mortification when I discovered that no one seemed to suspect that such a

thing as Rozel Abbey existed within a circuit of a hundred leagues. I called at the *prefecture* while still laboring under the effect of this disappointment: the *préfet*, Valton, whom you know very well, received me with his usual affability; but to the questions I addressed him on the subject of the condition of the ruins which the council seemed so desirous of preserving for the admiration of its constituents, he replied, with an absent smile, that his wife, who had visited these ruins on the occasion of an excursion into the country, while she was sojourning on the sea-shore, could tell me a great deal more about the ruins than he possibly could himself.

He invited me to dinner, and in the evening, Madame Valton, after the usual struggles of expiring modesty, showed me, in her album, some views of the famous ruins sketched with considerable taste. She became mildly excited while speaking to me of these venerable remains, situated, if she is to be believed, in the midst of an enchanting site, and, above all, particularly well suited for picnics and country excursions. A beseeching and corrupting look terminated her harangue. It seems evident to me that this worthy lady is the only person in the department who takes any real interest in that poor old Abbey, and that the conscript fathers of the general council have passed their resolution authorizing an investigation out of pure gallantry. It is impossible for me, however, not to concur in their opinion: the Abbey has beautiful eyes; she deserves to be classed,—she shall be classed.

My decision was therefore settled, from that moment, but it was still necessary to write it down and back it with some documentary evidence. Unfortunately, the

local archives and libraries do not abound in traditions relative to my subject; after two days of conscientious rummaging, I had collected but a few rare and insignificant documents, which may be summed up in these two lines: "Rozel Abbey, in Rozel township, was inhabited from time immemorial by monks, who left it when it fell in ruins."

That is why I resolved to go, without further delay, and ask their secret of these mysterious ruins, and to multiply, if need be, the artifices of my pencil, to make up for the compulsory concision of my pen. I left on Wednesday morning for the town of Vitry, which is only two or three leagues distant from the Abbey. A Norman coach, complicated with a Norman coachman, jogged me about all day, like an indolent monarch, along the Norman hedges. When night came, I had travelled twelve miles and my coachman had taken twelve meals. The country is fine, though of a character somewhat uniformly rustic. Under everlasting groves is displayed an opulent and monotonous verdure, in the thickness of which contented-looking oxen ruminant. I can understand my coachman's twelve meals: the idea of eating must occur frequently and almost exclusively to the imagination of any man who spends his life in the midst of this rich nature, the very grass of which gives an appetite.

Towards evening, however, the aspect of the landscape changed: we entered a rolling prairie, quite low, marshy, bare as a Russian *steppe*, and extending on both sides of the road; the sound of the wheels on the causeway assumed a hollow and vibrating sonority; dark-colored reeds and tall, unhealthy-looking grass covered, as far as the eye could reach, the blackish surface of the marsh. I noticed

in the distance, through the deepening twilight, and behind a cloud of rain, two or three horsemen running at full speed, and as if demented, through these boundless spaces; they disappeared at intervals in the depressions of the meadows, and suddenly came to sight again, still galloping with the same frenzy. I could not imagine towards what imaginary goal these equestrian phantoms were thus madly rushing. I took good care not to inquire: mystery is a sweet and sacred thing.

The next morning, I started for the Abbey, taking with me in my cabriolet a tall young peasant who had yellow hair, like Ceres. He was a farm-boy who had lived since his birth within a rod of my monument; he had heard me in the morning asking for information in the court-yard of the inn, and had obligingly volunteered to show me the way to the ruins, which were the first thing he had seen on coming into the world. I had no need whatever of a guide: I accepted, nevertheless, the fellow's offer, his officious chattering seeming to promise a well-sustained conversation, in the course of which I hoped to detect some interesting legend; but as soon as he had taken his seat by my side, the rascal became dumb; my questions seemed even, I know not why, to inspire him with a deep mistrust, almost akin to anger. I had to deal with the Genius of the ruins, the faithful guardian of their treasures. On the other hand, I had the gratification of taking him home in my carriage; it was apparently all he wished, and he had every reason to be satisfied with my accommodating spirit.

After landing this agreeable companion at his own door, it became necessary for me to alight also; a rocky path, or rather a rude flight of stone steps, winding down

the side of a steep declivity, led me to the bottom of a narrow valley which spreads and stretches between a double chain of high wooded hills. A small river flows lazily through it under the shade of alder-bushes, dividing two strips of meadows as fine and velvety as the lawns of a park; it is crossed over an old bridge with a single arch, which reflects in the placid water the outlines of its graceful ogive. On the right, the hills stand close together in the form of a circus, and seemed to join their verdure-clad curves; on the left, they spread out until they become merged in the deep and sombre masses of a vast forest. The valley is thus closed on all sides, and offers a picture of which the calm, the freshness, and the isolation penetrate the soul.

The ruins of the Abbey stand with their back against the forest. What remains of the Abbey proper is not a great deal. At the entrance of the court-yard, a monumental gateway; a wing of the building, dating from the twelfth century, in which dwell the family of the miller of whom I am the guest; the chapter-hall, remarkable for some elegant arches and a few remnants of mural painting; finally, two or three cells, one of which seems to have been used for purposes of correction, if I may judge from the solidity of the door and the strength of the bolts. The rest has been torn down, and may be found in fragments among the cottages of the neighborhood. The church, which has almost the proportions of a cathedral, is finely preserved, and produces a marvellous effect. The portal and the apsis have alone disappeared; the whole interior architecture, the covings, the tall columns, are intact and as if built yesterday. There, it seems that an artist must have presided over the work of destruction: a masterly

stroke of the pick-axe has opened at the two extremities of the church, where stood the portal and where stood the altar, two gigantic bays, so that, from the threshold of the edifice, the eye plunges into the forest beyond as through a deep triumphal arch. In this solitary spot the effect is unexpected and solemn. I was delighted with it. “Monsieur,” I said to the miller, who, since my arrival, had been watching my every step from a distance with that fierce mistrust which is a peculiarity of this part of the country, “I have been requested to examine and to sketch these ruins. That work will require several days; could you not spare me a daily trip from the town to the Abbey and back, by furnishing me with such accommodations as you can, for a week or two?”

The miller, a thorough Norman, examined me from head to foot without answering, like a man who knows that silence is of gold: he measured me, he gauged me, he weighed me, and finally, opening his flour-coated lips, he called his wife. The latter appeared at once upon the threshold of the Chapter-hall, converted into a cow-pen, and I had to repeat my request to her. She examined me in her turn, but not at such great length as her husband, and, with the superior scent of her sex, her conclusion was, as I had the right to expect, that of the *præses* in the *Malade Imaginaire*: “*Dignus es intrare.*” The miller, who saw what turn things were taking, lifted his cap and treated me to a smile. I must add that these excellent people, once the ice broken, tried in every way to compensate me, by a thousand eager attentions, for the excessive caution of their reception. They wished to give up to me their own room, adorned with the *Adventures of Telemachus*, but I preferred—as Mentor would

have done—a cell of austere nudity, of which the window, with small, lozenge-shaped panes, opens on the ruined portal of the church and the horizon of the forest.

Had I been a few years younger, I would have enjoyed keenly this poetic installation; but I am turning gray, friend Paul, or at least I fear so, though I am trying still to attribute to a mere effect of light the doubtful shades that dot my beard under the rays of the noon-day sun. Nevertheless, if my reverie has changed its object, it still lasts, and still has its charms for me. My poetic feeling has become modified and, I think, more elevated. The image of a woman is no longer the indispensable element of my dreams; my heart, peaceful now, and striving to become still more so, is gradually withdrawing from the field of my mind's labors. I cannot, I confess, find enough pleasure in the pure and dry meditations of the intellect; my imagination must speak first and set my brain in motion, for I was born romantic, and romantic I shall die; and all that can be asked of me, all I can obtain of myself, at an age when propriety already commands gravity, is to build romances without love.

Up to this time, ennui has spared me in my solitude. Shall I confess to you that I even experience in it a singular feeling of contentment? It seems as though I were a thousand leagues away from the things of the world, and that there is a sort of truce and respite in the miserable routine of my existence, at once so agitated and so commonplace. I relish my complete independence with the naïve joy of a twelve-year-old Robinson Crusoe. I sketch when I feel like it; the rest of the time, I walk here and there at random, being careful only never to go beyond the bounds of the sacred valley. I sit down

upon the parapet of the bridge, and I watch the running water; I go on voyages of discovery among the ruins; I dive into the underground vaults; I scale the shattered steps of the belfry, and being unable to come down again the same way, I remain astride a gargoyle, cutting a rather sorry figure, until the miller brings me a ladder. I wander at night through the forest, and I see deer running by in the moonlight. All these things have a soothing effect on my mind, and produce the effect of a child's dream in middle age.

Your letter dated from Cologne, and which was forwarded to me here according to my instructions, has alone disturbed my beatitude. I console myself with some difficulty for having left Paris almost on the eve of your return. May Heaven confound your whims and your want of decision! All I can do now, is to hurry my work; but where shall I find the historical documents I still need? I am seriously anxious to save these ruins. There is here a rare landscape, a valuable picture, which it would be sheer vandalism to allow to perish.

And then, I admire the old monks! I wish to offer up to their departed shades this homage of my sympathy. Yes, had I lived some thousand years ago, I would certainly have sought among them the repose of the cloister while waiting for the peace of heaven. What existence could have suited me better? Free from the cares of this world, and assured of the other, free from any agitations of the heart or the mind, I would have placidly written simple legends which I would have been credulous enough to believe; I would have unravelled with intense curiosity some unknown manuscripts, and discovered with tears of joy the *Iliad* or the *Æneid*; I would

have sketched imaginary cathedrals; I would have heated alembics,—and perhaps have invented gunpowder: which is by no means the best thing I might have done.

Come! 'tis midnight; brother, we must sleep!

Postscriptum.—There are ghosts! I was closing this letter, my dear friend, in the midst of a solemn silence, when suddenly my ears were filled with mysterious and confused sounds that seemed to come from the outside, and among which I thought I could distinguish the buzzing murmur of a large crowd. I approached, quite surprised, the window of my cell, and I could not exactly tell you the nature of the emotion I felt on discovering the ruins of the church illuminated with a resplendent blaze; the vast portal and the yawning ogives cast floods of light as, far as the distant woods. It was not, it could not be, an accidental conflagration. Besides, I could see, though the stone trefoils, shadows of superhuman size flitting through the nave, apparently performing, with a sort of rhythm, some mysterious ceremony. I threw my window abruptly open; at the same instant, a loud blast broke forth in the ruins, and rang again through all the echoes of the valley; after which, I saw issuing from the church a double file of horsemen bearing torches and blowing horns, some dressed in red, others draped in black, with plumes waving over their heads. This strange procession followed, still in the same order, amid the same dazzling light and the same clangor of trumpets, the shaded path that skirts the edge of the meadows. Having reached the little bridge, it stopped; I saw the torches rise, wave, and cast showers of sparks; the horns sounded a weird and prolonged blast; then suddenly every light disappeared, every noise ceased, and the valley

was again wrapped in the darkness and the deep silence of the night. That is what I saw and heard. You who have just arrived from Germany, did you meet the Black Huntsman? No? Hang yourself, then!

II.

16TH SEPTEMBER.

THE forest which once formed part of the demesnes of the Abbey, now belongs to a wealthy landed proprietor of the district, the Marquis de Malonet, a lineal descendant of Nimrod, whose château seems to be the social centre of the district. There are almost daily at this season grand hunts in the forest: yesterday, the party ended with a supper on the grass, and afterwards a ride home by torch-light. I felt very much disposed to strangle the honest miller, who gave me this morning, in vulgar language, this explanation of my midnight ballad.

There is the world, then, invading with all its pomp my beloved solitude. I curse it, Paul, with all the bitterness of my heart. I became indebted to it, last night, it is true, for a fantastic apparition that both charmed and delighted me; but I am also indebted to it to-day for a ridiculous adventure which I am the only one not to laugh at, for I was its unlucky hero.

I was but little disposed to work this morning; I went on sketching, however, until noon, but had to give it up then: my head was heavy, I felt dull and disagreeable, I had a vague presentiment of something fatal in the air.

I returned for a moment to the mill to get rid of my traps; I quarrelled, to her surprise and grief, with the miller's wife, on the subject of I know not what cruelly indigenous mess she had served me for breakfast; I scolded the good woman's two children because they were touching my pencils; finally, I administered a vigorous kick to the house-dog, accompanied with the celebrated formula: "Judge whether you had done anything to me!"

Rather dissatisfied with myself, as you may imagine, after these three mean little tricks, I directed my steps towards the forest, in order to hide as much as possible from the light of day. I walked about for nearly an hour without being able to shake off the prophetic melancholy that oppressed me. Perceiving at last, on the edge of one of the avenues that traverse the forest, and under the dense shade of some beech-trees, a thick bed of moss, I stretched myself upon it, together with my remorse, and it was not long before I fell into a sound sleep. *Mon Dieu!* why was it not the sleep of death?

I have no idea how long I had been asleep, when I was suddenly awakened by a certain concussion of the soil in my immediate vicinity; I jumped abruptly to my feet, and I saw, within five steps of me, on the road, a young lady on horseback. My unexpected apparition had somewhat frightened the horse, who had shied with some violence. The fair equestrian, who had not yet noticed me, was talking to him and trying to quiet him. She appeared to me pretty, slender, elegant. I caught a rapid glimpse of blonde hair, eyebrows of a darker shade, keen eyes, a bold expression of countenance, and a felt hat with blue feathers, set over one ear in rather too

rakish a style. For the better understanding of what is about to follow, you should know that I was attired in a tourist's blouse stained with red ochre; besides, I must have had that haggard look and startled expression which impart to one rudely snatched from sleep a countenance at once comical and alarming. Add to all this, my hair in utter disorder, my beard strewn with dead leaves, and you will have no difficulty in understanding the terror that suddenly overpowered the young huntress at the first glance she cast upon me; she uttered a feeble cry, and wheeling her horse around, she fled at full gallop.

It was impossible for me to mistake the nature of the impression I had just produced; there was nothing flattering about it. However, I am thirty-five years of age, and the more or less kindly glance of a woman is no longer sufficient to disturb the serenity of my soul. I followed with a smiling look the flying Amazon. At the extremity of the avenue in which I had just failed to make her conquest, she turned abruptly to the left, to go and take a parallel road. I only had to cross the adjoining thicket to see her overtake a cavalcade composed of ten or twelve persons, who seemed to be waiting for her, and to whom she shouted from a distance, in a broken voice:

"Gentlemen! gentlemen! a wild man! there is a wild man in the forest!"

My interest being highly excited by this beginning, I settle myself comfortably behind a thick bush, with eye and ear equally attentive. They crowd around the lady; it is supposed at first that she is jesting, but her emotion is too serious to have been causeless. She saw, distinctly saw, not exactly a savage, perhaps, but a man in rags,

whose tattered blouse seemed covered with blood, whose face, hands, and whole person were repulsively filthy, whose beard was frightful, and eyes half projecting from their sockets; in short, an individual, by the side of whom the most atrocious of Salvator Rosa's brigands would be as one of Watteau's shepherds. Never did a man's vanity enjoy such a treat. This charming person added that I had threatened her, and that I had jumped at her horse's bridle like the spectre of the forest of Mans.*

The response to this marvellous story is a general and enthusiastic shout:

"Let us chase him! let us surround him! let us track him! hip, hip, hurrah!"—whereupon the whole cavalry force starts off at a gallop in the direction of the amiable story-teller.

I had, to all appearances, but to remain quietly ensconced in my hiding-place in order to completely foil the hunters who were going in search of me in the avenue where I had met the beautiful Amazon. Unfortunately, I had the unlucky idea, for greater safety, of making my way into the opposite thicket. As I was cautiously crossing the open space, a wild shout of joy informs me that I have been discovered; at the same time, I see the whole squadron wheeling about and coming down upon me like a torrent. There remained but one reasonable course for me to pursue: it was to stop, to affect the surprise of a quiet stroller disturbed in his walk, and to disconcert my assailants by an attitude at once simple

* Charles VI., King of France, became demented in consequence of his horse being stopped, during a hunt in the forest of Mans, by what seemed to him a supernatural being.—(TRANS.)

and dignified ; but, seized with a foolish shame which it is easier to conceive than to explain,—convinced, moreover, that a vigorous effort would be sufficient to rid me of this importunate pursuit and to spare me the annoyance of an explanation,—I commit the error—the ever deplorable error—of hurrying on faster, or rather, to be frank with you, of running away as fast as my legs would carry me. I cross the road like a hare, I penetrate into the thicket, greeted on my passage with a volley of joyous clamors. From that moment my fate was sealed ; all honorable explanation became impossible for me ; I had ostensibly accepted the struggle with its most extreme chances.

However, I still possessed a certain presence of mind, and while tearing furiously through the brambles, I soothed myself with comforting reflections. Once separated from my persecutors by the whole depth of a thicket inaccessible to cavalry, it would be an easy matter to gain a sufficient advance upon them to be able to laugh at their fruitless search. This last illusion vanished when, on reaching the limit of the covered space, I discovered that the cursed troop had divided into two squads, who were both waiting for me at the outlet. At the sight of me, a fresh storm of shout and laughter broke forth, and the hunting-horns sounded in all directions. I became dizzy ; I felt the forest whirling around me ; I rushed into the first path that offered itself to me, and my flight assumed the character of a hopeless rout.

The implacable legion of hunters and huntresses did not fail to start on my heels with renewed ardor and stupid mirth. I still recognized at their head the lady with the waving blue plume, who distinguished herself

by her peculiar animosity, and upon whom I invoked with all my heart the most serious accidents to which equestrianism may be subject. It was she who encouraged her odious accomplices, when I had succeeded for a moment in eluding the pursuit; she discovered me with infernal keen-sightedness, pointed me out with the tip of her whip, and broke into a barbarous laugh whenever she saw me resume my race through the bushes, blowing, panting, desperate, absurd. I ran thus during a space of time of which I am unable to form any estimate, accomplishing unprecedented feats of gymnastics, tearing through the thorny brambles, sinking into the miry spots, leaping over the ditches, bounding upon my feet with the elasticity of a panther, galloping to the devil, without reason, without object, and without any other hope but that of seeing the earth open beneath my feet.

At last, and surely by chance,—for I had long since lost all topographical notions,—I discovered the ruins just ahead of me; with a last effort, I cleared the open space that separates them from the forest, I ran through the church as if I had been excommunicated, and I arrived panting before the door of the mill. The miller and his wife were standing on the threshold, attracted, doubtless, by the noise of the cavalcade that was following close on my heels; they looked at me with an expression of stupor; I tried in vain to find a few words of explanation to cast to them as I ran by, and after incredible efforts of intelligence, I was only able to murmur in a silly tone: “If any one asks for me, say I am not in!” Then I cleared in three jumps the stairs leading to my cell, and I sank upon my bed in a state of complete prostration.

In the meantime, Paul, the hunting-party were crowding tumultuously into the court-yard of the Abbey; I could hear the stamping of the horses' feet, the voices of the riders, and even the sound of their boots on the flagging, which proved that some of them had alighted and were threatening me with a last assault. I started up with a gesture of rage, and I glanced at my pistols. Fortunately, after a few minutes' conversation with the miller, the hunters withdrew, not without giving me to understand that, if they had formed a better opinion of my character, they went away with a most amusing idea of the eccentricity of my disposition.

Such is, my dear friend, a faithful historical account of that unlucky day, during which I covered myself frankly, and from head to foot, with a species of illustration to which any Frenchman would prefer that of crime. I have, at this moment, the satisfaction of knowing that I am in a neighboring château, in the midst of a gathering of brilliant men and lovely young women, an inexhaustible subject for jokes. I feel, moreover, since my flank movement (as it is customary in war to call precipitate retreats), that I have lost something of my dignity to my own eyes, and I cannot conceal to myself, besides, that I am far from enjoying the same consideration on the part of my rustic hosts.

In presence of a situation so seriously compromised, it became necessary to hold council: after a brief deliberation, I rejected far, far from me, as puerile and pusillanimous, the project suggested to me by my vanity at bay, that of giving up my lodgings, and even of leaving the district entirely. I made up my mind to pursue philosophically the course of my labors and my pleasures,

to show a soul superior to circumstances, and in short, to give to the Amazons, the centaurs, and the millers the fine spectacle of the wise man in adversity.

III.

MALOUET, 20TH SEPTEMBER.

I HAVE just received your letter. You belong to the true breed of Monomotapa friends, Paul. But what puerility! And such is the cause of your sudden return! A trifle, a silly nightmare which for two successive nights caused you to hear the sound of my voice calling on you for help! Ah! bitter fruits of the wretched German cuisine! Really, Paul, you are foolish! And yet, you tell me things that move me to tears. I cannot answer you as I would like to. My heart is tender, but my speech is dry. I have never been able to tell any one, "I love you!" There is a jealous fiend who alters on my lips every word of affection, and imparts to it a tone of irony. But, thank God, you know me!

It seems that I make you laugh while you make me weep? Well, I am glad of it. Yes, my noble adventure in the forest has had a sequel, and a sequel with which I might very well have dispensed. All the misfortunes which you felt were threatening me have actually happened to me; rest easy, therefore.

The day following this fatal day, I began by reconquering the esteem of my hosts at the mill, by relating to them

good-naturedly the most piquant episodes of my famous race. I saw them beaming as they heard the narrative ; the woman in particular was writhing in atrocious convulsions, and with formidable stretches of her jaws. I have never seen anything so hideous, in all my life, as this coarse, cowherd's joy !

As a testimonial of the complete restoration of his sympathy, the miller asked me if I was fond of hunting, took down from a hook over his mantel-piece a long, rusty tube, that made me think of Leather Stocking's rifle, and laid it into my hands, while boasting of the murderous qualities of that instrument. I acknowledged his kindness with an outward appearance of lively satisfaction, never having had the heart to undeceive people who think they are doing something to please me, and I started for the woods that cover the hill-sides, carrying like a lance that venerable weapon, which seemed indeed to me of the most dangerous kind. I went to take a seat on the heather, and I carefully laid down the long gun by me ; then I amused myself driving away, by throwing stones at them, the young rabbits that ventured imprudently in the vicinity of an engine of war for the effects of which I could not be responsible. Thanks to these precautions, for over an hour that this hunt lasted, no accident happened either to the game or to myself.

To speak candidly, I was rather glad to allow the hour to pass when the hunting-party from the château are in the habit of taking the field, not caring very much, through a remnant of vain glory, to find myself on their passage that day. Towards two o'clock in the afternoon, I left my seat of mint and wild thyme, satisfied that I had, henceforth, no unpleasant encounter to apprehend.

I handed the blunderbuss to the miller, who seemed somewhat surprised to see me empty-handed, and more so, probably, to see me alive still. I went to take a stand opposite the portal, and I undertook to finish a general view of the ruin, a magnificent water-color, which is certainly to secure the approbation of the minister.

I was deeply absorbed in my work, when I suddenly fancied I could hear more distinctly than usual that sound of running horses which, since my misadventure, was forever haunting my ears. I turned around sharply, and I discovered the enemy within two hundred paces of me. This time, he was attired in plain clothes, being apparently equipped for an ordinary ride; he had obtained, since the previous day, several recruits of both sexes, and now really formed an imposing body. Though long prepared for such an occurrence, I could not help a certain discomfort, and I secretly cursed those indefatigable idlers. Nevertheless, the thought of retreating never occurred to me; I had lost all taste for flight for the rest of my days.

As the cavalcade drew nearer, I could hear smothered laughter and whisperings, the subject of which was but too evident to me. I must confess that a spark of anger was beginning to burn in my heart, and while going on with my work with an appearance of unabated interest, and indulging in admiring motions of the head before my water-color, I was lending to the scene going on behind me a sombre and vigilant attention. However, the first intention of the party seemed to be to spare my misfortune: instead of following the path by the side of which I was established, and which was the shortest way to the ruins, they turned aside towards the right, and filed by in

silence. One alone among them, falling out of the main group, came rapidly in my direction, and stopped within ten steps of my studio; though my face was bent over my drawing, I felt, by that strange intuition which every one knows, a human look fixed upon me. I raised my eyes with an air of indifference, dropping them again almost immediately: that rapid gesture had been sufficient to enable me to recognize in that indiscreet observer the young lady with the blue feathers, the original cause of all my mishaps. She was there, boldly seated on her horse, her chin raised, her eyes half closed, examining me from head to foot with admirable insolence. I had thought it best at first, out of respect for her sex, to abandon myself without resistance to her impertinent curiosity; but after a few seconds, as she manifested no intention of putting an end to her proceedings, I lost patience, and raising my head more openly, I fixed my eyes upon her with polite gravity, but persisting steadiness. She blushed; seeing which, I bowed. She returned me a slight inclination of the head, and moving off at a canter, she disappeared under the vault of the old church. I thus remained master of the field, keenly relishing the triumph of fascination I had just obtained over that little person, whom there certainly was considerable merit in putting out of countenance.

The ride through the forest lasted some twenty minutes, and I soon beheld the brilliant *fantasia* debouching pell-mell from the portal. I feigned again a profound abstraction; but this time again, one of the riders left the company and advanced towards me: he was a man of tall stature, who wore a blue frock-coat, buttoned up to his chin, in military style. He was marching so straight

upon my little establishment, that I could not help supposing he intended passing right over it for the amusement of the ladies. I was therefore watching him with a furtive but wide-awake glance, when I had the satisfaction of seeing him stop within three steps of my camp-stool, and removing his hat :

“Monsieur,” he said in a full and frank tone of voice, “will you permit me to look at your drawing ?”

I returned his salutation, nodded in token of acquiescence, and went on with my work. After a moment of silent contemplation, the unknown equestrian, apparently yielding to the violence of his impressions, allowed a few laudatory epithets to escape him ; then, resuming his direct allocution :

“Monsieur,” he said, “allow me to return thanks to your talent ; we shall be indebted to it, I feel quite sure, for the preservation of these ruins, which are the ornament of our district.”

I abandoned at once my reserve, which could no longer be anything but childish sulkiness, and I replied, as I thought I should, that he was appreciating with too much indulgence a mere amateur’s sketch ; that I certainly had the greatest desire of saving these beautiful ruins, but that the most important part of my work threatened to remain quite insignificant, for want of historical information which I had vainly tried to find in the archives of the county-seat.

“Parbleu, Monsieur,” rejoined the horseman, “you please me greatly. I have in my library a large proportion of the archives of the Abbey. Come and consult them at your leisure. I shall feel grateful to you for doing so.”

I thanked him with some embarrassment.—I regretted not to have known it sooner. I feared being recalled to Paris by a letter which I was expecting this very day.—Nevertheless, I had risen to make this answer, the ill grace of which I strove to attenuate by the courteousness of my attitude. At the same time, I formed a clearer idea of my interlocutor: he was a handsome old man, with broad shoulders, who seemed to carry with ease the weight of some sixty winters, and whose bright blue eyes expressed the kindest good feeling.

"Come! come!" he exclaimed, "let us speak frankly. You feel some repugnance at mingling with that band of hare-brained scamps you see yonder, and whom I tried in vain yesterday to keep out of a silly affair, for which I now beg to tender you my sincere apologies. My name is the Marquis de Malouet, sir. After all, you went off with the honors of the day. They wished to see you; you did not wish to be seen. You carried your point. What else can you ask?"

I could not help laughing on hearing such a favorable interpretation of my unlucky scrape.

"You laugh!" rejoined the old marquis; "bravo! we'll soon come to an understanding, then. Now, what's to prevent your coming to spend a few days at my house? My wife has requested me to invite you; she has heard in detail all your annoyances of yesterday. She has an angel's disposition, my wife. . . . She is no longer young, always ill; a mere breath; but she is an angel, . . . I'll locate you in the library . . . you'll live like a hermit, if you like. . . . Mon Dieu! I see it all, I tell you: these madcaps of mine frighten you; you are a serious man; I know all about that sort of disposition!

Well! you'll find congenial company . . . my wife is full of sense; I am no fool myself. I am fond of exercise; in fact, it is indispensable to my health,—but you must not take me for a brute! . . . The devil! not at all! I'll astonish you. . . . You must be fond of whist: we'll have a game together; you must like to live well,—delicately, I mean, as it is proper and suitable for a man of taste and intelligence. Well! since you appreciate good living, I am your man; I have an excellent cook . . . I may even say that I have two for the present: one coming in and the other going out; it is a conjunction; the result is, a contest of skill, an academic tourney, of which you will assist me in adjudging the prize! . . . Come!" he added, laughing ingenuously at his own chattering, "it's settled, isn't it? I'm going to carry you off."

Happy, Paul, thrice happy is the man who can say No! Alone, he is really master of his time, of his fortune, and of his honor. One should be able to say No! even to a beggar, even to a woman, even to an amiable old man, under penalty of surrendering at hazard his charity, his dignity, and his independence. For want of a manly No, how much misery, how many downfalls, how many crimes since Adam!

While I was considering in my own mind the invitation which had just been extended to me, these thoughts crowded in my brain; I recognized their profound wisdom, and I said Yes!—Fatal word, through which I lost my paradise, exchanging a retreat wholly to my taste—peaceful, laborious, romantic, and free—for the stiffness of a residence where society displays all the fury of its insipid dissipations.

I demanded the necessary time for effecting my re-

moval, and Monsieur de Malouet left me, after grasping my hand cordially, declaring that he was extremely pleased with me, and that he was going to stimulate his two cooks to give me a triumphant reception. “I am going,” he said in conclusion, “to announce to them an artist, a poet: that’ll work up their imagination.”

Toward five o’clock, two valets from the chateau came to take charge of my light baggage, and to advise me that a carriage was waiting for me on top of the hills. I bade farewell to my cell; I thanked my hosts; and I kissed their little urchins, all besmeared and ill-kempt as they were. These kind people seemed to see me going with regret. I felt, myself, an extraordinary and unaccountable sadness. I know not what strange sentiment attached me to that valley, but I left it with an aching heart, as one leaves his native country.

More to-morrow, Paul, for I am exhausted.

IV.

26TH SEPTEMBER.

THE chateau of Malouet is a massive and rather vulgar construction, which dates some one hundred years back. Fine avenues, a court of honor of a handsome style, and an ancient park impart to it, however, an aspect truly seigneurial.

The old marquis came to receive me at the foot of the stoop, passed his arm under mine, and after leading me

through a long maze of corridors, introduced me into a vast drawing-room, where almost complete obscurity prevailed; I could only vaguely distinguish, by the intermittent blaze of the hearth, some twenty persons of both sexes, scattered here and there in small groups. Thanks to this blessed twilight, I effected safely my entrance, which had at a distance offered itself to my imagination, under a solemn and somewhat alarming light. I had barely time to receive the compliment of welcome which Madame de Malouet addressed me in a feeble but penetrating voice. She took my arm almost at once to pass into the dining-room, having resolved, it appears, to refuse no mark of consideration to a pedestrian of such surprising agility.

Once at the table and in the bright light, I was not long in discovering that my feats of the previous day had by no means been forgotten, and that I was the centre of general attention; but I stood bravely this cross-fire of curious and ironical glances, intrenched on the one hand behind a mountain of flowers that ornamented the centre of the table, and on the other assisted in my defensive position by the ingenious kindness of my neighbor. Madame de Malouet is one of those rare old women whom superior strength of mind or great purity of soul has preserved against despair at the fatal hour of the fortieth year, and who have saved from the wreck of their youth a single waif, itself a supreme charm, grace. Small, frail, her face pale and withered from the effects of habitual suffering, she justifies exactly her husband's expression: "She is a breath, a breath that exhales intelligence and good-nature!" Not a shadow of any pretension unbecoming her age, an exquisite care of her person without the

faintest trace of coquetry, a complete oblivion of her departed youth, a sort of bashfulness at being old, and a touching desire, not to please, but to be forgiven: such is my adorable marquise. She has travelled much, read much, and knows Paris well. I roamed with her through one of those rapid conversations in which two minds whirl and for the first time seek to become acquainted, rambling from one pole to the other, touching lightly upon all things, disputing gayly, and happy to agree.

Monsieur de Malouet seized the opportunity of the removal of the colossal dish that separated us, to ascertain the condition of my relations with his wife. He seemed satisfied at our evident good intelligence, and raising his sonorous and cordial voice:

“Monsieur,” he said to me, “I have spoken to you of my two rival cooks; now is the time to justify the reputation of high discernment which I have attributed to you in the minds of these artists. . . . Alas! I am about to lose the oldest, and without doubt the most skilful, of these masters—the illustrious Jean Rostain. It was he, sir, who, on his arrival from Paris, two years ago, made this remarkable speech to me: ‘A man of taste, Monsieur le Marquis, can no longer live in Paris; they practise there now, a certain romantic style of cooking, which will lead us Heaven knows where!’—In short, sir, Rostain is a classic: this singular man has an opinion of his own! Well! you have just tasted in succession two *entremets* dishes of which cream forms the essential foundation; according to my idea, these dishes are both a success; but Rostain’s work has struck me as greatly superior. . . . Ah, ah! sir, I am curious to know if you can—of your own accord and upon that simple indication, as—

sign to each tree its fruit, and render unto Cæsar what belongs to Cæsar. . . . Ah, ah, let us see if you can ! ”

I cast a furtive glance at the remnants of the two dishes to which the marquis had just called my attention, and I had no hesitation in designating as “ classic ” the one that was surmounted with a temple of Cupid, and a figure of that god in polychromatic pastry.

“ A hit ! ” exclaimed the marquis. “ Bravo ! Rostain shall hear of it, and his heart will rejoice. Ah ! monsieur, why has it not been my good fortune to receive you in my house a few days sooner ? I might perhaps have kept Rostain, or, to speak more truly, Rostain might perhaps have kept me, for I cannot conceal the fact, gentlemen hunters, that you are not in the good graces of the old *chef*, and I am not far from attributing his departure, with whatever pretexts he may choose to color it, to the annoyance he feels at your complete indifference. Thinking it might be agreeable to him, I informed him, a few weeks ago, that our hunting-meetings were about to secure him a concourse of connoisseurs worthy of his talents.”

“ Monsieur le Marquis will excuse me,” replied Rostain with a melancholy smile, “ if I do not share his illusions : in the first place, a hunter devours and does not eat ; he brings to the table the stomach of a man just saved from shipwreck, *iratum ventrem*, as Horace says, and swallows up without choice and without reflection, *gulæ parens*, the most serious productions of an artist ; in the second place, the violent exercise of the chase has developed in such guests an inordinate thirst, which they generally slake without moderation. Now, Monsieur le Marquis is not ignorant of the opinion of the ancients on

the excessive use of wine during meals ; it blunts the taste, —*exsurdant vina palatum* ! Nevertheless, Monsieur le Marquis may rest assured that I shall labor to please his guests with my usual conscientiousness, though with the painful certainty of not being understood.”

After uttering these words, Rostain draped himself in his toga, cast to heaven the look of an unappreciated genius, and left my study.

“I would have thought,” I said to the marquis, “that you would have spared no sacrifice to retain that great man.”

“You judge me correctly, sir,” replied Monsieur de Malouet ; “but you’ll see that he carried me to the very limits of impossibility. Precisely a week ago, Monsieur Rostain, having solicited a private audience, announced to me that he found himself under the painful necessity of leaving my service. ‘Heavens ! Monsieur Rostain, to leave my service ! And where do you expect to go ?’ ‘To Paris.’ ‘What ! to Paris ! But you had shaken upon the great Babylon the dust of your sandals ! The decadence of taste, the increasing development of the romantic cuisine ! Such are your own words, Rostain !’ He replied : ‘Doubtless, Monsieur le Marquis ; but provincial life has bitter trials which I had not foreseen !’ I offered him fabulous wages ; he refused.—‘Come, my good fellow, what is the matter ? Ah ! I see, you don’t like the scullery-maid ; she disturbs your meditations by her vulgar songs ; very well, consider her dismissed ! . . . That is not enough ? Is it Antoine, then, who is objectionable ? I’ll discharge him ! Is it the coachman ? I’ll send him away !’ In short, I offered him, gentlemen, the whole household as a holocaust. But, at all these prodigious

concessions, the old *chef* shook his head with indifference. 'But finally,' I exclaimed, 'in the name of Heaven, Monsieur Rostain, do explain! 'Mon Dieu! Monsieur le Marquis,' then said Jean Rostain, 'I must confess to you that it is impossible for me to live in a place where I find no one to play a game of billiards with me!' Ma foi! it was a little too much!" added the marquis, with cheerful good-nature. "I could not really offer to play billiards with him myself! I had to submit. I wrote at once to Paris, and last evening a young cook arrived, who wears a mustache and gave his name as Jacquemart (of Bordeaux). The classic Rostain, in a sublime impulse of artistic pride, volunteered to assist Monsieur Jacquemart (of Bordeaux) in his first effort, and that's how, gentlemen, I was able to-day to serve this great eclectic dinner, of which, I fear, we will alone, monsieur and myself, have appreciated the mysterious beauties."

Monsieur de Malouet rose from the table as he was concluding the story of Rostain's epic. After coffee, I followed the smokers into the garden. The evening was magnificent. The marquis led me away along the main avenue, the fine sand of which sparkled in the moonlight between the dense shadows of the tall chestnuts. While talking with apparent carelessness, he submitted me to a sort of examination upon a variety of subjects, as if to make sure that I was worthy of the interest he had so gratuitously manifested towards me up to this time. We were far from agreeing on all points; but, gifted both with sincerity and good-nature, we found almost as much pleasure in arguing as we did in agreeing. That epicurean is a thinker; his thought, always generously inclined, has assumed, in the solitude where it has developed

itself, a peculiar and paradoxal turn. I wish I could give you an idea of it.

As we were returning to the château, we heard a great noise of voices and laughter, and we saw at the foot of the stoop some ten or twelve young men who were jumping and bounding, as if trying to reach, without the help of the steps, the platform that crowns the double staircase. We were able to understand the explanation of these passionate gymnastics as soon as the light of the moon enabled us to distinguish a white dress on the platform. It was evidently a tournament of which the white dress was to crown the victor. The young lady (had she not been young, they would not have jumped so high) was leaning over the balustrade, exposing boldly to the dew of an autumn night, and to the kisses of Diana, her flower-wreathed head and her bare shoulders; she was slightly stooping down, and held out to the competitors an object somewhat difficult to discern at a distance: it was a slender cigarette, the delicate handiwork of her white fingers and her rosy nails. Although there was nothing in the sight that was not charming, Monsieur de Malouet probably found in it something he did not like, for his tone of cheerful good-humor became suddenly shaded with a perceptible tint of annoyance, when he murmured:

"There it is again! I was sure of it! It is the *Little Countess*!"

It is hardly necessary for me to add that I had recognized, in the *Little Countess*, my Amazon with the blue plume, who, with or without plume, seems to have always the same disposition. She recognized me perfectly also, on her side, as you'll see directly. At the moment when we were reaching, Monsieur de Malouet and myself, the top of

the stoop, leaving the rival pretenders to vie and struggle with increasing ardor, the little countess, intimidated perhaps by the presence of the marquis, resolved to put an end to the scene, and thrust abruptly her cigarette into my hand, saying :

“ Here ! it’s for you ! After all, you jump better than any of them.”

And she disappeared after this parting shaft, which possessed the double advantage of hitting at once both the victor and the vanquished.

This was, so far as I am concerned, the last noticeable episode of the evening. After a game or two of whist, I pretexted a little fatigue, and Monsieur de Malouet had the kindness to escort me in person to a pretty little room, hung with chintz and contiguous to the library. I was disturbed during part of the night by the monotonous sound of the piano and the rumbling noise of carriages, indications of civilization which made me regret more bitterly than ever my poor Thebaïs.

V.

28TH SEPTEMBER.

I HAD the satisfaction of discovering in the library of the marquis the historical documents I needed. They form, indeed, a part of the ancient archives of the Abbey, and have a special interest for the family of Malouet. It was one William Malouet, a very noble man and a knight, who, about the middle of the twelfth century, with the

consent of Messieurs his sons, Hughes, Foulgues, John, and Thomas, restored the church and founded the Abbey in favor of the order of the Benedictine monks, and for the salvation of his soul and of the souls of his ancestors, granting unto the congregation, among other dues and privileges, the fee-simple of the lands of the Abbey, the tithe of all its revenues, half the wool of its flocks, three loads of wax to be received every year at Mount Saint-Michel-on-the-sea; then the river, the moors, the woods, and the mill, *et molendinum in eodem situ*. I took pleasure in following through the wretched latin of the time the description of this familiar landscape. It has not changed.

The foundation charter bears date 1145. Subsequent charters show that the Abbey of Rozel was in possession, in the thirteenth century, of a sort of patriarchate over all the institutions of the order of Saint Benedict that were then in existence in the province of Normandy. A general chapter of the order was held there every year, presided over by the Abbot of Rozel, and at which some ten or a dozen other convents were represented by their highest dignitaries. The discipline, the labors, the temporal and spiritual management of all the Benedictines of the province were here controlled and reformed with a severity which the minutes of these little councils attest in the noblest terms. These scenes, replete with dignity, took place in that Capitulary Hall now so shamefully defiled.

Aside from the archives, this library is very rich, and this is apt to divert attention. Moreover, the vortex of worldly dissipation that rages in the chateau is not without occasionally doing some prejudice to my independence. Finally, my worthy hosts frequently take away with

one hand the liberty they have granted me with the other: like many persons of the world, they have not a very clear idea of the degree of connected occupation which deserves the name of work, and an hour or two of reading appears to them the utmost extent of labor that a man can bear in a day.

“Consider yourself wholly free,” Monsieur de Malouet tells me every morning; “go up to your hermitage; work at your ease.”

An hour later he is knocking at my door:

“Well! are we hard at work?”

“Why, yes, I am beginning to get into it.”

“What! the deuce! You have been at it more than two hours! You are killing yourself, my friend. However, you are free. By the way, my wife is in the parlor; when you have done you’ll go and keep her company, won’t you?”

“Most undoubtedly I will.”

“But only when you have entirely done, of course.”

And he goes off for a hunt or a ride by the seaside. As to myself, preoccupied with the idea than I am expected, and satisfied that I shall be unable to do any further work of value, I soon resolve to go and join Madame de Malouet, whom I find deeply engaged in conversation with the parish priest, or with Jacquemart (of Bordeaux). She has disturbed me, I am in her way, and we smile pleasantly to each other.

Such is the manner in which the middle of the day usually passes off.

In the morning, I ride on horseback with the marquis, who is kind enough to spare me the crowd and tumult of the general riding-parties. In the evening, I take a hand at whist, then I chat a while with the ladies, and I try my best

to cast off at their feet my bear's skin and reputation; for I dislike to display any eccentricity of my own, this one rather more so than any other. There is in a grave disposition, when carried to the point of stiffness and ill-grace towards women, something coarsely pedantic, that is unbecoming in great talents and ridiculous in lesser ones. I retire afterwards, and I work rather late in the library. That's the best of my day.

The society at the chateau is usually made up of the marquis' guests, who are always numerous at this season, and of a few persons of the neighborhood. The object of these entertainments on a grand scale is, above all, to celebrate the visit of Monsieur de Malouet's only daughter, who comes every year to spend the autumn with her family. She is a person of statuesque beauty, who amuses herself with queenly dignity, and who communicates with ordinary mortals by means of contemptuous monosyllables uttered in a deep bass voice. She married, some twelve years ago, an Englishman, a member of the diplomatic corps, Lord A——, a personage equally handsome and impassive as herself. He addresses at intervals to his wife an English monosyllable, to which the latter replies imperturbably with a French monosyllable. Nevertheless, three little lords, worthy the pencil of Lawrence, who strut majestically around this Olympian couple, attest between the two nations a secret intelligence which escapes the vulgar observer.

A scarcely less remarkable couple comes over to us daily from a neighboring chateau. The husband is one Monsieur de Breuilley, formerly an officer in King Charles X.'s body-guards, and a bosom friend of the marquis. He is a very lively old man, still quite fine-looking, and wear-

ing over close-cropped gray hair a hat too small for his head. He has an odd, though perhaps natural, way of scanning his words, and of speaking with a degree of deliberation that seems affected. He would be quite pleasant, however, were it not that his mind is constantly tortured by an ardent jealousy, and by a no less ardent apprehension of betraying his weakness, which, nevertheless, is a glaring and obvious fact to every one. It is difficult to understand how, with such a disposition and a great deal of common-sense, he has committed the signal error of marrying, at the age of fifty-five, a young and pretty woman, and a creole, I believe, in the bargain.

“Monsieur de Breuilly!” said the marquis, as he presented me to the punctilious gentleman, “my best friend, who will infallibly become yours also, and who, quite as infallibly, will cut your throat if you attempt to show any attention to his wife.”

“Mon Dieu! my dear friend,” replied Monsieur de Breuilly, with a laugh that was anything but joyful, and accentuating each word in his peculiar style, “why represent me to this gentleman as a Norman Othello? Monsieur may surely. . . . Monsieur is perfectly free to . . . besides, he knows and can observe the proper limits of things. At any rate, sir, here is Madame de Breuilly; suffer me to recommend her myself to your kind attentions.”

Somewhat surprised at this language, I had the simplicity, or perhaps the innocent malice, of interpreting it literally. I sat down squarely by the side of Madame de Breuilly, and I began paying her marked attention, while, however, “observing the proper limits of things.” In the meantime, Monsieur de Breuilly was watching us

from a distance, with an extraordinary countenance. I could see his little gray eyes sparkling like glowing ashes; he was laughing loud, grinning, stamping, and fairly dis-jointing his fingers with sinister cracks. Monsieur de Malouet came suddenly to me, handed me a whist card, and taking me aside :

“What the deuce has got into you?” he said.

“Into me? why, nothing!”

“Have I not warned you? It’s quite a serious matter. Look at Breuilly! It is the only weakness of that gallant man; every one respects it here. Do likewise, I beg of you.”

From the weakness of that gallant man, it results that his wife is condemned in society to perpetual quarantine. The fighting propensities of a husband are often but an additional attraction for the lightning; but men hesitate to risk their lives without any prospect of possible compensation, and we have here a man who threatens you at least with a public scandal, not only before harvest, as they say, but even before the seed has been fairly sown. Such a state of affairs manifestly discourages the most enterprising, and it is quite rare that Madame de Breuilly has not two vacant seats on her right and on her left, despite her *nonchalante* grace, despite her great creole eyes, and despite her plaintive and beseeching looks, that seem to be ever saying: “Mon Dieu! will no one lead me into temptation?”

You would doubtless think that the evident neglect in which the poor wife lives ought to be, for her husband, a motive of security. Not at all! His ingenious mania manages to discover in that fact a fresh motive of perplexity.

"My friend," he was saying yesterday to Monsieur de Malouet, "you know that I am no more jealous than any one else; but without being Orosmane, I do not pretend to be George Dandin. Well! one thing troubles me, my friend: have you noticed that apparently no one pays any attention to my wife?"

"Parbleu! if that's what troubles you. . . ."

"Of course it is; you must admit that it is not natural. My wife is pretty; why don't they pay attention to her as well as to other ladies? There is something suspicious there!"

Fortunately, and to the great advantage of the social question, all the young women who reside in turn at the chateau are not guarded by dragons of that calibre. A few even, and among them two or three Parisians out for a holiday, display a freedom of manner, a love of pleasure, and an exaggerated elegance that certainly pass the bounds of discretion. You are aware that I have not the highest opinion of that sort of behavior, which does not answer my idea of the duties of a woman, and even of a woman of the world; nevertheless, I take side without hesitation with these giddy ones; and their conduct even appears to me the very ideal of truth and sincerity, when I hear nightly certain pious matrons distilling against them, amid low and vulgar gossip, the venom of the basest envy that can swell a rural heart. Moreover, it is not always necessary to leave Paris in order to have the ugly spectacle of these provincials let loose against what they call vice, namely, youth, elegance, distinction, charm,—in a word, all the qualities which the worthy ladies possess no more, or have perhaps never possessed.

Nevertheless, with whatever disgust these chaste vixens

inspire me for the virtue they pretend to uphold (O virtue! how many crimes are committed in thy name!), I am compelled, to my great regret, to agree with them on one point, and to admit that one of their victims at least gives an appearance of justice to their reprobation and to their calumnies. The Angel of Kindness himself would hide his face in presence of this complete specimen of dissipation, of turbulence, of futility, and finally of worldly extravagance that bears the name of Countess de Palme, and the nickname of the Little Countess: a rather ill-fitting nickname, by the way, for the lady is not small, but simply slender and lithe. Madame de Palme is twenty-five years of age; she is a widow; she spends the winter in Paris with her sister, and the summer in an old Norman manor-house, with her aunt, Madame de Pontbrian. Let me get rid of the aunt first.

This aunt, who is of very ancient nobility, is particularly noted for the fervor of her hereditary opinions, and for her strict devotion. Those are both claims to consideration which I admit fully, so far as I am concerned. Every solid principle and every sincere sentiment command in these days a peculiar respect. Unfortunately Madame de Pontbrian seems to be one of those intensely devout persons who are but very indifferent Christians. She is one of those who, reducing to a few minor observances, of which they are ridiculously proud, all the duties of their religious or political faith, impart to both a harsh and hateful appearance, the effect of which is not exactly to attract proselytes. The outer forms, in all things, are sufficient for her conscience; otherwise, no trace of charity or kindness; above all, no trace of humility. Her genealogy, her assiduity to church, and her annual

pilgrimages to the shrine of an illustrious exile (who would probably be glad to dispense with the sight of her countenance), inspire to this fairy such a lofty idea of herself and such a profound contempt for her neighbor, that they make her positively unsociable. She remains forever absorbed in the latrion worship which she believes due to herself. She deigns to speak but to God, and He must indeed be a kind and merciful God if He listens to her.

Under the nominal patronage of this mystic duenna, the Little Countess enjoys an absolute independence, which she uses to excess. After spending the winter in Paris, where she kills off regularly two horses and a coachman every month for the sole gratification of waltzing ten minutes every night in half a dozen different balls, Madame de Palme feels the necessity of seeking rest in the peace of rural life. She arrives at her aunt's, she jumps upon a horse, and she starts at full gallop. It matters not which way she goes, provided she keeps going. Most generally she comes to the Chateau de Malouet, where the kind-hearted mistress of the house manifests for her an amount of predilection which I can hardly understand. Familiar with men, impertinent with women, the Little Countess offers a broad mark to the most indiscreet homage of the former, and to the jealous hostility of the latter. Indifferent to the outrages of public opinion, she seems ready to aspire to the coarsest incense of gallantry; but what she requires above all things is noise, movement, a whirl, worldly pleasure carried to its most extreme and most extravagant fury; what she requires every morning, every evening, and every night, is a break-neck chase, which she conducts

with frenzy ; a reckless game, in which she may break the bank ; an unbridled German, which she leads until dawn. A stoppage of a single minute, a moment of rest, of meditation and reflection, would kill her. Never was an existence at once so busy and so idle ; never a more unceasing and more sterile activity.

Thus she goes through life hurriedly and without a halt, graceful, careless, busy, and ignorant as the horse she rides. When she reaches the fatal goal, that woman will fall from the nothingness of her agitation into the nothingness of eternal rest, without the shadow of a serious idea, the faintest notion of duty, the lightest cloud of a thought worthy a human being, having ever grazed, even in a dream, the narrow brain that is sheltered behind her pure, smiling, and stupid brow. It might be said that death, at whatever age it may overtake her, will find the Little Countess just as she left the cradle, if it were possible to suppose that she has preserved its innocence as well as she has retained its profound puerility.

Has that madcap a soul ?—The word nothingness has escaped me. It is indeed difficult for me to conceive what might survive that body when it has once lost the vain fever and the frivolous breath that seem alone to animate it.

I know too well the miserable ways of the world, to take to the letter the accusations of immorality of which Madame de Palme is here the object on the part of the witches, as also on the part of some of her rivals who are silly enough to envy her social success. It is not in that respect, as you may understand, that I treat her with so much severity. Men, when they show themselves unmerciful for certain errors, are too apt to forget that they

have all, more or less, spent part of their lives seeking to bring them about for their own benefit. But there is in the feminine type which I have just sketched something more shocking than immorality itself, which, however, it is rather difficult to separate from it. And so, notwithstanding my desire of not making myself conspicuous in anything, I have been unable to take upon myself to join the throng of admirers whom Madame de Palme drags after her triumphal car. I know not whether

“Le tyran dans sa cour remarqua mon absence.”

I am sometimes tempted to believe it, from the glances of astonishment and scorn with which I am overwhelmed when we meet; but it is more simple to attribute these hostile symptoms to the natural antipathy that separates two creatures as dissimilar as we are. I look at her at times, myself, with the gaping surprise which must be excited in the mind of any thinking being by the monstrosity of such a psychological phenomenon. In that way we are even.

I ought rather to say we *were* even, for we are really no longer so, since a rather cruel little adventure that happened to me last night, and which constitutes in my account-current with Madame de Palme a considerable advance, which she will find it difficult to make up. I have told you that Madame de Malouet, through I know not what refinement of Christian charity, manifested a genuine predilection for the Little Countess. I was talking with the marquise last evening in a corner of the drawing-room. I took the liberty of telling her that this predilection, coming from a woman like her, was a bad example; that I had never very well understood, for my

part, that passage of the Holy Scriptures in which the return of a single sinner is celebrated above the constant merit of a thousand just, and that this had always appeared to me very discouraging for the just.

“In the first place,” answered Madame de Malouet, “the just do not get discouraged ; and in the next place, there are none. Do you fancy yourself one, by chance ? ”

“Certainly not ; I am perfectly well aware of the contrary.”

“Well, then, where do you get the right of judging your neighbor so severely ? ”

“I do not acknowledge Madame de Palme as my neighbor.”

“That’s convenient ! Madame de Palme, sir, has been badly brought up, badly married, and always spoilt ; but, believe me, she is a genuine rough diamond.”

“I only see the roughness.”

“And rest assured that it only requires a skilful workman—I mean a good husband—to cut and polish it.”

“Allow me to pity that future lapidary.”

Madame de Malouet tapped the carpet with her foot, and manifested other signs of impatience, which I knew not at first how to interpret, for she is never out of humor ; but suddenly a thought, which I took for a luminous one, occurred in my mind : I had no doubt that I had at last discovered the weak side and the only failing in that charming old woman. She was possessed with the mania of match making, and, in her Christian anxiety to snatch the Little Countess from the abyss of perdition, she was secretly meditating to hurl me into it with her, unworthy though I be. Penetrated with this modest con-

viction, I kept upon a defensive that seems to me, at the present moment, perfectly ridiculous.

“*Mon Dieu!*” said Madame de Malouet, “because you doubt her learning! . . .”

“I do not doubt her learning,” I said; “I doubt whether she knows how to read.”

“But, in short, what fault do you find with her?” rejoined Madame de Malouet in a singularly agitated tone of voice.

I determined to demolish, at a single stroke, the matrimonial dream with which I supposed the marchioness to be deluding herself.

“I find fault with her,” I replied, “for giving to the world the spectacle, supremely irritating even for a profane like me, of triumphant nullity and haughty vice. I am not worth much, it’s true, and I have no right to judge, but there is in me, as well as in any theatrical audience, a certain sentiment of reason and morality that rises in indignation in presence of personages wholly devoid of common-sense or virtue, and that protests against their triumph.”

The old lady’s indignation seemed to increase.

“Do you think I would receive her, if she deserved all the stones which slander casts at her?”

“I think it is impossible for you to believe any evil.”

“Bah! I assure you that you do not show in this case any evidence of penetration. These love-stories which are attributed to her are so little like her! She is a child who does not even know what it is to love!”

“I am convinced of that, madame. Her commonplace coquetry is sufficient evidence of that. I am even ready to swear that the allurements of the imagination or the

impulses of passion are wholly foreign to her errors, which thus remain without excuse."

"Oh! mon Dieu!" exclaimed Madame de Malouet, clasping her hands, "do hush! she is a poor, forsaken child! I know her better than you do. I assure you that beneath her appearance—much too frivolous, I admit—she possesses in fact as much heart as she does sense."

"That is precisely what I think, madame; as much of one as of the other."

"Ah! that is really intolerable!" murmured Madame de Malouet, dropping her arms in a disconsolate manner.

At the same moment, I saw the curtain that half covered the door by the side of which we sat shake violently, and the Little Countess, leaving the hiding-place where she had been confined by the exigencies of I know not what game, showed herself to us for a moment in the aperture of the door, and returned to join the group of players that stood in the adjoining parlor. I looked at Madame de Malouet:

"What! she was there!"

"Of course she was. She heard us, and, what's more, she could see us. I made all the signs I could, but you were off!"

I remained somewhat embarrassed. I regretted the harshness of my words; for, in attacking so violently this young person, I had yielded to the excitement of controversy much more than to a sentiment of serious animadversion. In point of fact, she is indifferent to me, but it's a little too much to hear her praised.

"And now what am I to do?" I said to Madame de Malouet.

She reflected for a moment, and replied with a slight shrug of her shoulders :

“Ma foi ! nothing : that’s the best thing you can do.”

The least breath causes a full cup to overflow ; thus the little unpleasantness of this scene seems to have intensified this feeling of ennui which has scarce left me since my advent into this abode of joy. This continuous gayety, this restless agitation, this racing and dancing and dining, this ceaseless merry-making, and this eternal round of festivity importune me to the point of disgust. I regret bitterly the time I have wasted in reading and investigations which in no wise concern my official mission and have but little advanced its termination ; I regret the engagements which the kind entreaties of my hosts have extorted from my weakness ; I regret my vale of Tempe ; above all, Paul, I regret you. There are certainly in this little social centre a sufficient number of superior and kindly disposed minds to form the elements of the pleasantest and even the most elevated relations ; but these elements are fairly submerged in the worldly and vulgar throng, and can only be eliminated from it with much trouble and difficulty, and never without admixture. Monsieur and Madame de Malouet, Monsier de Breuilly even, when his insane jealousy does not deprive him of the use of his faculties, certainly possess choice minds and hearts ; but the mere difference of age opens an abyss between us. As to the young men and the men of my own age whom I meet here, they all march with more or less eager step in Madame de Palme’s wake. It is enough that I should decline to follow them in that path, to cause them to manifest toward me a coolness akin to antipathy. My pride does

not attempt to break that ice, though two or three among them appear well gifted, and reveal instincts superior to the life they have adopted.

There is one question I sometimes ask of myself on that subject: are we any better, you and I, youthful Paul, than this crowd of joyous companions and pleasant *viveurs*, or are we simply different from them? Like ourselves, they possess honesty and honor; like ourselves, they have neither virtue nor religion properly so-called. So far, we are equal. Our tastes alone and our pleasures differ: all their preoccupations turn to the lighter ways of the world, to the cares of gallantry and material activity; ours are almost exclusively given up to the exercise of thought, to the talents of the mind, to the works, good or evil, of the intellect. In the light of human truth, and according to common estimation, it is doubtful whether the difference in this particular is wholly in our favor; but in a more elevated order, in the moral order, and, so to speak, in the presence of God, does that superiority hold good? Are we merely yielding, as they do, to an inclination that leads us rather more to one side than to an other, or are we obeying an imperative duty? What is in the eyes of God the merit of intellectual life? It seems to me sometimes that we possess for thought a species of pagan worship to which He attaches no value, and which perhaps even offends Him. More frequently, however, I think that He wishes us to make use of thought, were it even to be turned against Him, and that He accepts as an homage all the quiverings of that noble instrument of joy and torture which He has placed within us.

Is not sadness, in periods of doubt and anxiety, a

species of religion? I trust so. We are, you and I, somewhat like those poor dreaming sphinxes who have been asking in vain for so many centuries, from the solitudes of the desert, the solution of the eternal riddle. Would it be a greater and more guilty folly than the happy carelessness of the Little Countess? We shall see. In the meantime, retain, for my sake, that groundwork of melancholy upon which you weave your own gentle mirth; for, thank God! you are not a pedant: you can live, you can laugh, and even laugh aloud; but thy soul is sad unto death, and that is only why I love unto death thy fraternal soul.

VI.

1ST OCTOBER.

PAUL, there is something going on here that does not please me. I would like to have your advice; send it as soon as possible.

On Thursday morning, after finishing my letter, I went down to give it to the messenger, who leaves quite early; then, as it only wanted a few minutes of the breakfast-hour, I walked into the drawing-room, which was still empty. I was quietly looking over a *Review* by the fireside, when the door was suddenly flung open; I heard the crushing and rustling of a silk dress too broad to get easily through an aperture three feet wide, and I saw the Little Countess appear: she had spent the night at the chateau.

If you remember the unfortunate conversation in which I had become entangled, the previous evening, and which Madame de Palme had overheard from beginning to end, you will readily understand that this lady was the last person in the world with whom it might prove pleasant to find myself alone that morning.

I rose and I addressed her a deep curtsey; she replied with a nod, which, though slight, was still more than I deserved from her. The first steps she took in the parlor after she had seen me were stamped with hesitation and a sort of wavering: it was like the action of a partridge lightly hit on the wing and somewhat stunned by the shot. Would she go to the piano, to the window, to the right or to the left, or opposite? It was clear that she did not know herself; but indecision is not the weak point of her disposition: she soon made up her mind, and crossing the immense drawing-room with very firm step, she came in the direction of the chimney, that is, toward my immediate domain.

Standing in front of my arm-chair with my *Review* in my hand, I was awaiting the event with an apparent gravity that concealed but imperfectly, I fear, a rather powerful inward anxiety. I had indeed every reason to apprehend an explanation and a scene. In every circumstance of this kind, the natural feelings of our heart and the refinement which education and the habits of society add to them, the absolute freedom of the attack and the narrow limits allowed to the defence, give to women an overwhelming superiority over any man who is not a boor or a lover. In the particular crisis that was threatening me, the stinging consciousness of my wrongs, the recollection of the almost insulting

form under which my offence had manifested itself, united to deprive me of all thought of resistance; I found myself delivered over, bound hand and foot, to the frightful wrath of a young and imperious woman thirsting for vengeance. My attitude was, therefore, not very brilliant.

Madame de Palme stopped within two steps of me, spread her right hand on the marble of the mantel, and extended towards the blazing hearth the bronzed slipper within which her left foot was held captive. Having accomplished these preliminary dispositions, she turned towards me, and without addressing me a single word, she seemed to enjoy my countenance, which, I repeat, was not worth much. I resolved to sit down again and resume my reading; but previously, and by way of transition, I thought best to say politely :

“Wouldn't you like to have this *Review*, madame?”

“Thank you, sir, I cannot read.”

Such was the answer that was promptly shot off at me in a brief tone of voice. I made with my head and my hand a courteous gesture, by which I seemed to sympathize gently with the infirmity that was thus revealed to me, after which I sat down, feeling more easy. I had drawn my adversary's fire. Honor seemed to me satisfied.

Nevertheless, after a few moments of silence, I began again to feel the awkwardness of my situation; I strove in vain to become absorbed in my reading; I kept seeing a multitude of little bronzed slippers dancing all over the paper. An open scene would have appeared to me decidedly preferable to this unpleasant and persistent proximity, to the mute hostility betrayed to my furtive glance

by Madame de Palme's restless foot, the jingle of her rings on the marble mantel, and the quivering mobility of her nostrils. I therefore unconsciously uttered a sigh of relief when the door, opening suddenly, introduced upon the stage a new personage, whom I felt justified in considering as an ally. It was a lady,—a school-friend of Lady A——, —whose name is Madame Durmaitre. She is a widow, and extremely handsome; she is noted for a lesser degree of folly amid the wild and worldly ladies of the chateau. For this reason, and somewhat also on account of her superior charms, she has long since conquered the ill-will of Madame de Palme, who, in allusion to her rival's sombre style of dress, to the languid character of her beauty, and to the somewhat elegiac turn of her conversation, is pleased to designate her, among the young people, as the *Malabar Widow*. Madame Durmaitre is positively lacking in wit; but she is intelligent, tolerably well read, and much inclined to reverie. She prides herself upon a certain talent for conversation. Seeing that I am myself destitute of any other social accomplishment, she has got into her head that I must possess that particular one, and she has undertaken to make sure of it. The result has been, between us, a rather assiduous and almost cordial intercourse; for if I have been unable to fully respond to all her hopes, I listen at least with religious attention to the little melancholy pathos which is habitual with her. I appear to understand her, and she seems grateful for it. The truth is that I never tire hearing her voice, which is musical, gazing at her features, which are exquisitely regular, and admiring her large black eyes, over which a fringe of heavy eyelashes casts a mystic shadow. However, do not feel uneasy; I have

decided that the time for being loved, and consequently for loving, is over for me; now, love is a malady which no one need fear, if he sincerely strive to repress its first symptoms.

Madame de Palme had turned around at the sound of the opening door; when she recognized Madame Durmaitre, a fierce light gleamed in her blue eyes; chance had sent her a victim. She allowed the beautiful widow to advance a few paces towards us, with the slow and mournful step which is characteristic of her manner, and bursting out laughing:

“Bravo!” she exclaimed with emphasis, “the march to the scaffold! the victim dragged to the altar! Iphigenia; or, rather, Hermione . . .

“ ‘Pleurante après son char vous voulez qu’on me voie!’

“Who is it that has written this verse? I am so ignorant!—Ah! it’s your friend, M. de Lamartine, I believe. He was thinking of you, my dear!”

“Ah! you quote poetry now, dear madame?” said Madame Durmaitre, who is not very skilled at retort.

“Why not, dear madame? Have you a monopoly of it?—‘Pleurante après son char?’—I have heard Rachel say that.—By the way, it is not by Lamartine, it’s by Boileau. I must tell you, dear Nathalie, that I intend to ask you to give me lessons in serious and virtuous conversation. It’s so amusing! And to begin at once, come! tell me whom you prefer, Lamartine or Boileau?”

“But, Bathilde, there is no connection,” replied Madame Durmaitre, rather sensibly and much to candidly.

“Ah!” rejoined Madame de Palme. And suddenly

pointing me out with her finger: “You perhaps prefer this gentleman, who also writes poetry?”

“No, madame,” I said, “it is a mistake; I write none.”

“Ah! I thought you did. I beg your pardon.”

Madame Durmaitre, who doubtless owes the unalterable serenity of her soul to the consciousness of her supreme beauty, had been content with smiling with disdainful nonchalance. She dropped into the arm-chair, which I had given up to her.

“What gloomy weather!” she said to me; “really, this autumnal sky weighs upon the soul. I was looking out of the window: all the trees look like cypress-trees, and the whole country looks like a graveyard. It would really seem that. . . .”

“No, ah! no I beg of you, Nathalie,” interrupted Madame de Palme, “say no more. That’s enough fun before breakfast. You’ll make yourself sick.”

“Well, now! my dear Bathilde, you must really have slept very badly last night,” said the beautiful widow.

“I, my dear? ah! do not say that. I had celestial, ecstatic dreams; ecstasies, you know. . . . My soul held converse with other souls. . . . like your own soul. . . . Angels smiled at me through the foliage of the cypress-trees . . . and so forth, and so forth!”

Madame Durmaitre blushed slightly, shrugged her shoulders, and took up the *Review* I had laid upon the mantel-piece.

“By the bye, Nathalie,” resumed Madame de Palme, “do you know who we are going to have at dinner to-day, in the way of men?”

The good-natured Nathalie mentioned Monsieur de

Breuilly, two or three other married gentlemen, and the parish priest.

"Then I am going away after breakfast," said the Little Countess, looking at me.

"That's very polite for us," murmured Madame Durmaitre.

"You know," replied the other with imperturbable assurance, "that I only like men's society, and there are three classes of individuals whom I do not consider as belonging to that sex, or to any other: those are married men, priests, and *savants*."

As she concluded this sentence, Madame de Palme cast another glance at me, of which, however, I had no need to understand that she included me in her classification of neutral species; it could only be among the individuals of the third category, though I have no claim to it whatever; but it does not require much to be considered a savant by the ladies.

Almost at this very moment, the breakfast-bell rang in the court-yard of the chateau, and she added:

"Ah! there's breakfast, thank Heaven! for I am devilish hungry, with all respect for pure spirits and troubled souls."

She then ran and skipped to the other end of the parlor to greet Monsieur de Malouet, who was coming in followed by his guests. As to myself, I promptly offered my arm to Madame Durmaitre, and I endeavored by earnest attentions, to make her forget the storm which the mere shade of sympathy she manifests towards me had just attracted upon her.

As you may have remarked, the Little Countess had exhibited in the course of this scene, as always, an unmeas-

ured and unseemly freedom of language ; but she had displayed greater resources of mind than I supposed her capable of doing, and though they had been directed against me, I could not help feeling thankful to her,—to such an extent do I hate fools, whom I have ever found in this world more pernicious than wicked people. The result was, that to the feeling of repulsion and contempt with which the extravagantly worldly woman inspired me, there was henceforth mingled a shade of gentle pity for the badly brought-up child and the misdirected woman.

Women are prompt in catching delicate shades of feeling, and the latter did not escape Madame de Palme. She became vaguely conscious of a slightly favorable change in my opinion of her, and it was not long before she even began to exaggerate its extent and to attempt abusing it. For two days she pursued me with her keenest shafts, which I bore good-naturedly, and to which I even responded with some little attentions, for I had still at heart the rude expressions of my dialogue with Madame de Malouet, and I did not think I had sufficiently expiated them by the feeble martyrdom I had undergone the following day in common with the beautiful Malabar Widow.

This was enough to cause Madame Bathilde de Palme to imagine that she could treat me as a conquered province, and add Ulysses to his companions. Day before yesterday she had tested several times during the day the extent of her growing power over my heart and my will, by asking two or three little services of me ; services to the honor of which every one here eagerly aspires, and which, for my part, I discharged politely but with evident coolness.

In spite of the extreme reserve with which I had lent myself to these trials during the day, Madame de Palme believed in her complete success; she hastily judged that she now had but to rivet my chains and bind me to her triumph, a feeble addition of glory assuredly, but which had, after all, the merit, in her eyes, of having been contested. During the evening, as I was leaving the whist-table, she advanced towards me deliberately, and requested me to do her the honor of figuring with her in the character dance called the *cotillon*.^{*} I excused myself laughingly on my complete inexperience; she insisted, declaring that I had evident dispositions for dancing, and reminding me of the agility I had displayed in the forest. Finally, and to close the debate, she led me away familiarly by the arm, adding that she was not in the habit of being refused.

“Nor I, madame,” I said, “in that of making a show of myself.”

“What! not even to gratify me?”

“Not even for that, madame, and were it the only means of succeeding in doing so.”

I bowed to her smilingly after these words, which I had emphasized in such a positive manner that she insisted no more. She left my arm abruptly and returned to join a group of dancers who were observing us at a distance with manifest interest. She was received by them with whispers and smiles, to which she replied with a few rapid sentences, among which I only caught the word *revanche*. I paid no further attention to the matter for the time being, and my soul went to converse amid the clouds with the soul of Madame Durmaitre.

^{*} The German.

The next day a grand hunt was to take place in the forest. I had arranged to take no share in it, wishing to make the best of a whole day of solitude to push forward my hopeless undertaking. Towards noon, the hunters met in the court-yard of the chateau, which rang again for some fifteen minutes with the loud blast of the trumpets, the stamping of horses, and the yelping of the pack. Then the tumultuous crowd disappeared down the avenue, the noise gradually died away, and I remained master of myself and of my mind, in the midst of a silence the more grateful that it is the more rare on this meridian.

I had been enjoying my solitude for a few minutes, and I was turning over the folio pages of the *Neustra pia*, while smiling at my own happiness, when I fancied I heard the gallop of a horse in the avenue, and soon after on the pavement of the court. Some hunter behind time, I thought, and, taking up my pen, I began extracting from the enormous volume the passage relating to the General Chapters of the Benedictines; but a new and more serious interruption came to afflict me: some one was knocking at the library-door. I shook my head with ill-humor, and I said “Come in!” in the same tone in which I might have said “Go away!” Some one did come in. I had seen, a few moments before, Madame de Palme taking her flight, feathers and all, at the head of the cavalcade, and I was not a little surprised to find her again within two steps of me as soon as the door was open. Her head was bare, and her hair was tucked up behind in an odd manner; she held her whip in one hand, and with the other lifted up the long train of her riding-habit. The excitement of the rapid ride she had

just had seemed further to intensify the expression of audacity which is habitual to her look and to her features. And yet her voice was less assured than usual when she exclaimed as she came in :

“ Ah ! I beg your pardon ! I thought Madame de Malouet was here ? ”

I had risen at once to my full height.

“ No, madame, she is not here.”

“ Ah ! excuse me. Do you know where she is ? ”

“ I do not, madame ; but I can go and ascertain, if you wish.”

“ Thanks, thanks ! I’ll find her easy enough. The fact is, I met with a little accident.”

“ Indeed ! ”

“ Oh, not much ! a trailing limb tore the band off my hat, and my feathers dropped off.”

“ Your blue feathers, madame ? ”

“ Yes, my blue feathers. In short, I have returned to the chateau to have my hat-band sewed on again. You are comfortable there to work ? ”

“ Perfectly so, madame. I could not be better.”

“ Are you very busy just now ? ”

“ Well, yes, madame, rather busy.”

“ Ah ! I am sorry.”

“ Why so ? ”

“ Because, I had an idea . . . I thought of asking you to accompany me to the forest. The gentlemen will be nearly there when I am ready to start again,—and I cannot very well go on alone so far. . . .”

While lisping this somewhat confused explanation, the Little Countess had an expression at once sly and embarrassed, which greatly fortified the sentiment of distrust

which the awkwardness of her entrance had excited in my mind.

“Madame,” I said, “you really distress me. I shall regret all my life to have missed the delightful occasion you are kind enough to offer me ; but it is indispensable that to-morrow’s mail shall carry off this report, which the minister is expecting with extreme impatience.”

“You are afraid to lose your situation ?”

“I have none to lose, madame.”

“Well, then, let the minister wait, for my sake ; it will flatter me.”

“That is impossible, madame.”

She assumed a very dry tone :

“But, that is really strange ! What ! you are not more anxious to be agreeable to me ?”

“Madame,” I replied rather dryly in my turn, “I should be extremely anxious to be agreeable to you, but I am not at all anxious to help you win your wager.”

I threw out that insinuation somewhat at random, resting it upon some recollections and some slight indications which you may have been able to collect here and there in the course of my narrative. Nevertheless, I had hit it exactly. Madame de Palme blushed up to her ears, stammered out two or three words which I failed to catch, and left the room, having lost all countenance.

This precipitate retreat left me quite confused myself. I cannot admit that we should carry out our respect for the weaker sex so far as to lend ourselves to every caprice and every enterprise it may please a woman to direct against our peace or our dignity ; but our right of legitimate self-defence in such encounters is circumscribed within narrow and delicate limits, which I feared

I had overstepped. It was enough that Madame de Palme should be alone in the world, and without any other protection but her sex, to make it seem extremely painful to me to have thoughtlessly yielded to the irritation, just though it might be, which her impertinent insistence had aroused. As I was endeavoring to establish between our respective wrongs a balance that might serve to quiet my scruples, there was another knock at the library-door. This time, it was Madame de Malouet who came in. She was much moved.

“Do tell me what has taken place,” she said.

I gave her full and minute particulars of my interview with Madame de Palme, and, while expressing much regret at my vivacity, I added that the lady’s conduct towards me was inexplicable; that she had taken me twice within twenty-four hours for the subject of her wagers, and that it was a great deal too much attention, on her part, for a man who asked her, as a sole favor, not to trouble herself about him any more than he troubled himself about her.

“*Mon Dieu!*” said the kind marquise, “I have no fault to find with you. I have been able to appreciate with my own eyes, during the past few days, your conduct and her own. But all this is very disagreeable. That child has just thrown herself in my arms weeping terribly. She says you have treated her like a creature. . . .”

I protested: “I have repeated to you, word for word, madame, what passed between us.”

“It was not your words, it was your expression, your tone. Monsieur George, let me speak frankly with you: are you afraid of falling in love with Madame de Palme?”

“Not in the least, madame.”

“Are you anxious that she should fall in love with you?”

“Neither, I assure you.”

“Well, then, do me a favor: lay aside your pride for one day, and escort Madame de Palme to the hunt.”

“Madame!”

“The advice may seem singular to you. But rest assured that I do not offer it without mature reflection. The repulsion which you manifest for Madame de Palme is precisely what attracts towards you that imperious and spoilt child. She becomes irritated and obstinate in presence of a resistance to which she has not been accustomed. Be meek enough to yield to her fancy. Do that for me.”

“Seriously madame, you think? . . . ”

“I think,” interrupted the old lady laughingly, “with due respect to you, that you will lose your principal merit in her eyes as soon as she sees you submit to her yoke like all the rest.”

“Really, madame, you present things to me under an entirely novel aspect. It never occurred to me to attribute Madame de Palme’s mischievous pranks to a sentiment of which I might have reason to be proud.”

“And you have been quite right,” she resumed sharply; “there is, thank Heaven! nothing of the kind as yet; but it might have come, and you are too fair a man to desire it, with the views which I know you to entertain.”

“I trust myself wholly to your direction, madame;—I am going to fetch my hat and gloves. The question is now, how Madame de Palme will receive my somewhat tardy civility.”

"She will receive it very well, if you offer it with good grace."

"As to that, madame, I shall offer it with all the good grace I can command."

On this assurance, Madame de Malouet held out her hand, which I kissed with profound respect but rather slim gratitude.

When I entered the parlor, booted and spurred, Madame de Palme was alone there: deeply seated in an arm-chair, buried under her skirts, she was putting the finishing touches to her hat. She raised and dropped rapidly again her eyes, which were very red.

"Madame," I said, "I am so sincerely sorry to have offended you, that I venture to ask your pardon for an unpardonable piece of rudeness. I have come to hold myself at your disposition; if you decline my escort, you will not only be inflicting upon me an amply deserved mortification, but you will leave me still more unhappy than I have been guilty, . . . and that is saying a great deal."

Madame de Palme, taking into consideration the emotion of my voice rather more than my diplomatic pathos, lifted her eyes upon me again, opened her lips slightly, said nothing, and finally advanced a somewhat tremulous hand, which I hastened to receive within my own. She availed herself at once of this *point d'appui* to get on her feet, and bounded lightly to the floor. A few minutes later, we were both on horseback and leaving the court-yard of the chateau.

We reached the extremity of the avenue without having exchanged a single word. I felt deeply, as you may believe, how much this silence, on my part at least, was awkward, stiff, and ridiculous; but, as it often happens in

circumstances which demand most imperatively the resources of eloquence, I was stricken with an invincible sterility of mind. I tried in vain to find some plausible subject of conversation, and the more annoyed I felt at finding none, the less capable I became of doing so.

"Suppose we have a run?" said Madame de Palme suddenly.

"Let us have a run!" I said; and we started at a gallop, to my infinite relief.

Nevertheless, it became absolutely necessary to check our speed at the entrance of the tortuous path that leads down into the valley of the ruins. The care required to guide our horses during that difficult descent served for a few minutes longer as a pretext for my silence; but, on reaching the level ground of the valley, I saw that I must speak at any cost, and I was about to begin with some commonplace remark, when Madame de Palme was kind enough to anticipate me:

"They say, sir, that you are very witty?"

"You may judge for yourself, madame," I replied laughingly.

"Rather difficult so far, even if I were able, which you are very far from conceding. Oh! you need not deny it! It's perfectly useless, after the conversation which chance made me overhear the other night."

"I have made so many mistakes concerning you, madame, you must realize the pitiful confusion I feel towards you."

"And in what respect have you been mistaken?"

"In all respects, I believe."

"You are not quite sure? . . . Admit at least that I am a good-natured woman."

“Oh! with all my heart, madame!”

“You said that well. . . . I believe you think it. You are not bad either, I believe, and yet you have been cruelly so to me.”

“That is true.”

“What sort of man are you then, pray?” resumed the Little Countess in her brief and abrupt tone. “I cannot understand it very well. By what right, on what ground do you despise me? Suppose I am really guilty of all the intrigues which are attributed to me; what is that to you? Are you a saint yourself? a reformer? Have you never gone astray? Are you any more virtuous than other men of your age and condition? What right have you to despise me? Explain!”

“Were I guilty of the sentiments which you attribute to me, madame, I should answer, that never has any one, either in your sex or mine, taken his own morality as the rule of his opinion and his judgment upon others; we live as we can, and we judge as we should; it is more particularly a very frequent inconsistency among men, to frown down unmercifully the very weaknesses which they encourage and of which they derive the benefit. For my part, I hold severely aloof from a degree of austerity, as ridiculous in a man as uncharitable in a Christian. And as to that unfortunate conversation which a deplorable chance caused you to hear, and in which my expressions, as it always happens, went far beyond the measure of my thought,—it is an offence which I can never obliterate, I know; but I shall at least explain frankly. Every one has his own tastes and his way of understanding life in this world; we differ so much, you and I, in that respect, that I conceived for you, and you conceived for me, at first sight,

an extreme antipathy. This disposition, which, on one side at least, madame, was to be singularly modified on better acquaintance, prompted me to some thoughtless manifestations of ill-humor and vivacity of controversy. You have doubtless suffered, madame, from the violence of my language, but much less, I beg you to believe, than I was to suffer from it myself, after I had recognized its profound and irreparable injustice.”

This apology, more sincere than lucid, drew forth no answer. We were at this moment just coming out of the old Abbey church, and we found ourselves unexpectedly mingled to the last ranks of the cavalcade. Our appearance caused a suppressed murmur to run through the dense crowd of hunters. Madame de Palme was at once surrounded by a merry throng that seemed to address congratulations to her on the winning of her wager. She received them with an indifferent and pouting look, whipped up her horse, and made her way to the front before entering the forest.

In the meantime, Monsieur de Malouet had received me with still more cordial affability than usual, and without making any direct allusion to the incident which had brought me against my will to this cynegetic feast, he omitted no attention that could make me forget its trifling annoyance. Soon after the hounds started a deer, and I followed them with keen relish, being by no means indifferent to that manly pastime, though it is not sufficient for my happiness in this world.

The pack was thrown off the scent two or three times, and the deer had the best of the day. At about four o'clock we started on our way back to the chateau. When we crossed the valley on our return, the twilight was al-

ready marking out more clearly upon the sky the outline of the trees and the crest of the hills; a melancholy shade was falling upon the woods, and a whitish fog chilled the grass on the meadows, whilst a thicker mist indicated the sinuous course of the little river. As I remained absorbed in the contemplation of that scene which reminded me of better days, I discovered suddenly Madame de Palme at my side.

"I believe, after due reflection," she said with her usual abruptness, "that you scorn my ignorance and my lack of wit much more than my supposed want of morality. You think less of virtue than you do of intelligence. Is that it?"

"Certainly not," I said laughingly; "that isn't it; that isn't it at all. In the first place, the word *scorn* must be suppressed, having nothing to do here; then, I don't much believe in your ignorance, and not at all in your lack of wit. Finally, I see nothing above virtue, when I see it at all, which is not often. Furthermore, madame, I feel confused at the importance you attach to my opinion. The secret of my likes and dislikes is quite simple: I have, as I was telling you, the most religious respect for virtue, but all mine is limited to a deep-seated sentiment of a few essential duties which I practise as best I can; I could not therefore ask any more of others. As to the intellect, I confess that I value it greatly, and life seems too serious a matter to me to be treated on the footing of a perpetual ball, from the cradle to the grave. Moreover, the productions of the mind, works of art in particular, are the object of my most passionate preoccupations, and it is natural that I should like being able to speak of what interests me. That's all."

"Is it absolutely necessary to be forever talking of the ecstasies of the soul, of cemeteries, and the Venus of Milo, in order to obtain in your opinion the rank of a serious woman and a woman of taste? But, after all, you are right; I never think; if I did for one single minute, it seems to me that I should go mad, that my head would split.—And what were you thinking about yourself, in that old convent cell?"

"I thought a great deal about you," I replied gayly, "on the evening of that day when you hunted me down so unmercifully, and I abused you most heartily."

"I can understand that." She began laughing, looking all around her, and added: "What a lovely valley! what a delightful evening! And now, are you still disposed to abuse me?"

"Now, I wish from the bottom of my soul I were able to do something for your happiness."

"And I for yours," she said quietly.

I bowed for all answer, and a brief pause followed:

"If I were a man," suddenly said Madame de Palme, "I believe I would like to be a hermit."

"Oh! what a pity!"

"That idea does not surprise you?"

"No, madame."

"Nothing from me would surprise you, I suppose. You believe me capable of anything—of anything, perhaps even of being fond of you?"

"Why not? Greater wonders have been seen! Am I not fond of you myself at the present moment? That's a fine example to follow!"

"You must give me time to think about it?"

"Not long!"

“As long as it may be necessary. We are friends in the meantime?”

“If we are friends, there is nothing further to expect,” I said, holding out my hand frankly to the Little Countess. I felt that she was pressing it lightly, and the conversation ended there. We had reached the top of the hills; it was now quite dark, and we galloped all the rest of the way to the chateau.

As I was coming down from my room for dinner, I met Madame de Malouet in the vestibule.

“Well!” she said laughingly, “did you conform to the prescription?”

“Rigidly, madame.”

“You showed yourself subjugated?”

“I did, madame.”

“Excellent! She is satisfied now, and so are you.”

“Amen!” I said.

The evening passed off without further incident. I took pleasure in doing for Madame de Palme some trifling services which she was no longer asking. She left the dance two or three times to come and address me some good-natured jests that passed through her brain, and when I withdrew, she followed me to the door with a smiling and cordial look.

I ask you now, friend Paul, to sift the precise meaning and the moral of this tale. You may perhaps judge, and I hope you will, that a chimerical imagination can alone magnify into an event this vulgar episode of society life; but if you see in the facts I have just told you the least germ of danger, the slightest element of a serious complication, tell me so: I'll break the engagements that

were to detain me here some ten or twelve days longer, and I'll leave at once.

I do not love Madame de Palme; I cannot and will not love her. My opinion of her has evidently changed greatly; I look upon her henceforth as a good little woman. Her head is light and will always be so; her behavior is better than she gets credit for, though perhaps not as good as she represents it herself; finally, her heart has both weight and value. I feel some friendship for her, an affection that has something fraternal in it; but between her and me, nothing further is at all likely; the expanse of the heavens divides us. The idea of being her husband makes me burst out laughing, and through a sentiment which you will readily appreciate, the thought of being her lover inspires me with horror. As to her, I believe she may feel the shadow of a caprice, but not even the dawn of a passion. Here I am now upon her *étagère* with the rest of the figure-heads, and I think, as does Madame de Malouet, that may be enough to satisfy her. However, what do you think of it yourself?

VII.

7TH OCTOBER.

DEAR Paul, I take part in your grief from the bottom of my heart. Allow me, however, to assure you from the very details of your own letter that your dear mother's illness offers no alarming symptoms whatever. It is one of those painful but harmless crises which the approach

of winter brings back upon her almost invariably every year, as you know. Patience therefore, and courage, I beseech you.

It requires, my friend, the formal expression of your wishes to induce me to venture upon mingling my petty troubles to your grave solicitude. As you anticipated in your wisdom and in your kind friendship, it was consolation and not advice that I stood in need of when I received your letter. My heart is not at peace, and, what is worse for me, neither is my conscience; and yet, I think I have done my duty. Have I understood it right or not? Judge for yourself.

I take up my situation towards Madame de Palme where I had left it in my last letter.—The day after our mutual explanation, I took every care to maintain our relations upon the footing of good-fellowship on which they seemed established, and which constituted, in my idea, the only sort of intelligence desirable and even possible between us. It seemed to me, on that day, that she manifested the same vivacity and the same spirit as usual; yet I fancied that her voice and her look, when she addressed me, assumed a meek gravity which is not a part of her usual disposition; but on the following days, though I had not deviated from the line of conduct I had marked out for myself, it became impossible for me not to notice that Madame de Palme had lost something of her gayety, and that a vague preoccupation clouded the serenity of her brow. I could see her dancing-partners surprised at her frequent absence of mind: she still followed the whirl, but she no longer led it. Under pretext of fatigue, she would leave suddenly and abruptly her partner's arm, in the midst of a waltz, to go and sit in some corner with a

pensive and even a pouting look. If there happened to be a vacant seat next to mine, she threw herself into it, and began from behind her fan some whimsical and disjointed conversation like the following:

“ If I cannot be a hermit, I am going to become a nun. What would you say, if you saw me enter a convent to-morrow ? ”

“ I should say that you would leave it the day after to-morrow. ”

“ You have no confidence in my resolutions ? ”

“ When they are unwise, no. ”

“ I can only form unwise ones, according to you ? ”

“ According to me, you waltz admirably. When a person waltzes as you do, it's an art, almost a virtue. ”

“ Is it customary to flatter one's friends ? ”

“ I am not flattering you. I never speak a single word to you that I have not carefully weighed, and that is not the most earnest expression of my thought. I am a serious man, madame. ”

“ It does not seem so when you are with me. I verily believe you have undertaken to make me hate laughter as much as I used to like it. ”

“ I do not understand you. ”

“ How do you think I look to-night ? ”

“ Dazzling ! ”

“ That's too much ! I know that I am not handsome. ”

“ I don't say that you are handsome, but you are extremely graceful. ”

“ That's better ; and it must be true, for I feel it. The Malabar Widow is really handsome. ”

“ Yes, I should like to see her at the funeral pile. ”

“ To jump into it with her ? ”

"Exactly."

"Do you expect to leave soon?"

"Next week, I believe."

"Will you come and see me in Paris?"

"If you will allow me."

"No, I don't allow you."

"And why not? great Heavens!"

"In the first place, I don't think I am going back to Paris myself."

"That's a good reason. And where do you expect to go, madame?"

"I don't know. Let us make a pedestrian tour somewhere, you and I together; will you?"

"I should like nothing better. When shall we start?"

Et cætera. I shall not tire you, my friend, with the particulars of some dozen similar conversations, every occasion of which for four days Madame de Palme evidently sought. There was on her part a constantly growing effort to leave aside all commonplace topics, and impart to our interviews a character of greater intimacy; there was on mine an equal amount of obstinacy in confining them within the strictest limits of social jargon, and remaining resolutely on the ground of worldly futility.

I now come to the scene that was to bring this painful struggle to a close, and unfortunately prove all its vanity to me.

Monsieur and Madame de Malouet were giving last night a grand farewell ball to their daughter, whose husband has been recalled to his post of duty, and the whole neighborhood within a circuit of ten leagues had been summoned to the feast. Towards ten o'clock an immense crowd was overflowing the vast ground-floor of the chateau,

in which the elegant dresses, the lights, and the flowers were mingled in dazzling confusion. As I was trying to make my way into the main drawing-room, I found myself face to face with Madame de Malouet, who drew me slightly aside.

"Well! my dear sir," she said, "I do not like the looks of things."

"Mon Dieu! what is there new?"

"I don't know exactly, but be on your guard. Ah! mon Dieu! I have remarkable confidence in you, sir; you will not take advantage of her, will you?"

Her voice was tender and her eyes moist.

"You may rely upon me, madame;—but I sincerely wish I had gone a week ago."

"Eh! mon Dieu! who could have foreseen such a thing? . . . Hush! there she comes!"

I turned round and I saw Madame de Palme coming out of the parlor; before her the throng opened with that timorous eagerness and that species of terror which the supreme elegance of one of society's queens generally inspires to our sex. For the first time, Madame de Palme appeared handsome to me; the expression of her countenance was wholly novel to me, and a weird animation gleamed in her eyes and transfigured her features.

"Am I to your taste?" she said.

I manifested by I know not what movement an assent, which was moreover but too evident to the keen eye of a woman.

"I was looking for you," she added, "to show you the conservatory: it's fairy-like. Come!"

She took my arm, and we started in the direction of the conservatory door which opened at the other end of the

parlor, extending as far as the park, through the vines and the perfumes of hundreds of exotic plants, all the splendors of the feast. While we were admiring the effect of the girandoles that sparkled amid the luxuriant tropical flora like the bright constellations of another hemisphere, several gentlemen came to claim Madame de Palme's hand for a waltz; she refused them all, though I was sufficiently disinterested to join my entreaties to theirs.

"Our respective rôles seem to me somewhat interverted," she said: "it is I who am detaining you, and you wish to get rid of me!"

"Heaven preserve me from such an idea! but I am afraid lest you may deprive yourself, out of kindness to me, of a pleasure you are so fond of."

"No! I know very well that I seek you and you avoid me. It is rather absurd in the eyes of the world, but I care nothing for that. For this one evening at least, I mean to amuse myself as I like. I forbid you to disturb my happiness. I am really very happy. I have everything I require—beautiful flowers, excellent music around me, and a friend at my side. Only—and that's a dark spot on my blue sky—I am much more certain of the music and the flowers than I am of the friend."

"You are entirely wrong."

"Explain your conduct, then, once for all. Why will you never talk seriously with me? Why do you obstinately refuse to tell me one single word that savors of confidence, of intimacy—of friendship, in a word?"

"Please reflect for a minute, madame: where would that lead us to?"

"What is that to you? That would lead us where it

would. It is singular that you should be more anxious about it than I am."

"Come, what would you think of me if I ventured to speak of love to you?"

"I don't ask you to make love to me!" she said sharply.

"I know it, madame; and yet it is the inevitable turn my language would take if it ceased for a moment to be frivolous and commonplace. Now, admit that there is one man in the world who could not speak of love to you without incurring your contempt, and that I am that very man. I cannot say that I am very much pleased with having placed myself in such a position; but after all, it is so, and I cannot forget it."

"That is showing a great deal of judgment."

"That is showing a great deal of courage."

She shook her head with an air of doubt, and resumed after a moment of silence:

"Do you know that you have just spoken to me as if I were what is called a 'fast' woman?"

"Oh! Madame!"

"Of course, you think that I can never attribute to a man who pays his addresses to me any but improper intentions. If it were so, I would deserve being called a 'fast' woman, and I do not. I know you don't believe it, but it is the pure truth, as there is a God. . . . yes, as there is a God!—God knows me, and I pray to Him much oftener than is thought. He has kept me from doing harm thus far, and I hope He will keep me from it forever; but it is a thing of which He has not the sole control—"

She stopped for a moment, and then added in a firm tone:

"You can do much towards it."

"I, madame?"

"I have allowed you to take, I know not how—I really do not know how!—a great influence over my destiny. Will you be willing to use it? That is the question."

"And in what capacity could I do so, pray, madame?" I said slowly and in a tone of cold reserve.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, in a hoarse and energetic accent, "how can you ask me that? It is too hard! you humiliate me too much!"

She left my arm and returned abruptly into the parlor. I remained for some time uncertain as to what course to pursue. I thought first of following Madame de Palme and explaining to her that she was mistaken—which was true—as to the interrogative answer which had offended her. She had applied that answer to some thought that pervaded her mind, which I did not understand, or at least which her words had revealed to me much less clearly than she imagined; but after thinking over it, I shrank from the new and formidable explanation which such a course must inevitably bring about.

I left the conservatory, and walked into the garden to escape the hum of the ball-room, which importuned my ears. The night was cold but beautiful. With my heart still filled with the bitterness of this scene, I wandered instinctively beyond the luminous zone projected around the chateau through the apertures of the resplendent windows. I walked rapidly towards a double row of spruce-trees, crossed by a rustic bridge thrown over a small brook which divided the garden from the park, and where the shade was more dense. I had just reached this sombre spot, when a hand was laid on my arm and stopped me;

at the same time a short and troubled voice, which I could not mistake, said :

"I must speak to you!"

"Madame ! for mercy's sake ! in the name of Heaven ! what are you doing ? you will ruin your reputation ! Do return to the house ! Come, come, let me escort you back !"

I attempted to seize her arm, but she eluded my grasp.

"I want to speak to you. . . . I have decided to do so. . . . O mon Dieu ! how awkwardly I do go about it, don't I ? You must believe me more than ever a miserable creature ! and yet there is nothing in it, not a thing ; it's the truth, the pure truth, mon Dieu ! You are the first man for whose sake I have forgotten . . . all that I am now forgetting ! . . . Yes, the first ! Never has any other man heard from my lips a single word of tenderness, never ! And you do not believe me !"

I took both her hands in mine :

"I believe you, I swear it I swear that I esteem you . . . that I respect you as a beloved daughter . . . But listen to me ; pray, listen ! do not brave openly this pitiless world . . . return to the ball-room. . . . I'll join you there soon, I promise you. . . . But in the name of Heaven, do not compromise your fair fame !"

The poor child melted into tears, and I felt that she was staggering ; I supported her and helped her to a seat on a bench close by. I remained standing before her, holding one of her hands. The darkness was intense around us ; I gazed into space, and I listened, in a state of vague stupor, to the clear and regular murmur of the brook flowing under the spruce-trees, to the convulsive sobs that swelled the unhappy woman's bosom, and to the

odious sounds of revelry which the orchestra sent us at intervals from afar. It was one of those moments that can never be forgotten.

She succeeded in mastering her grief at last, and seemed, after this explosion, to recover all her firmness.

“Monsieur,” she said, rising and withdrawing her hand, “have no fears about my reputation. The world is accustomed to my follies. However, I have taken care that the present one shall not be noticed. Besides, I would not care if it was. You are the only man whose esteem I have ever desired, and, unfortunately the only one also whose contempt I have incurred. . . . That is most cruel! . . . and yet something must tell you that I do not deserve it.”

“Madame!”

“Listen to me! and may God convince you. This is a solemn hour in my existence. Since the first glance you ever cast upon me, sir,—on that day when I went up to you while you were sketching the old church,—since that first glance, I belong to you. I have never loved, I shall never love any man but you. Will you take me for your wife? I am worthy of it. . . . I swear it to you in the presence of that Heaven which is looking down upon us!”

“Dear madame, . . . dear child, . . . your kindness . . . your affection move me to the depths of my soul; in mercy, be more calm; let me retain a gleam of reason!”

“Ah! if your heart speaks, listen to it, sir! It is not with reason that I can be judged! Alas! I feel it! you still doubt me, you still doubt my past life. . . . O Heavens! that opinion of the world which I have always scorned, how it is killing me now!”

“No, madame, you are mistaken; but what could I

offer you in exchange for all you wish to sacrifice for my sake . . . for the habits, the tastes, the pleasures of your whole life?"

"But that life inspires me with horror! You think that I would regret it? You think that some day I may again become the woman I have been, the madcap you have known? . . . You think so! And how can I help your believing it? And yet I know very well that I would never cause you that sorrow, nor any other. . . . Never! I have discovered in your eyes a new world I did not know,—a more dignified, more lofty world, of which I had never conceived the idea . . . and outside of which I can no longer live. . . . Ah! you must certainly feel that I am telling you the truth!"

"Yes, madame, you are telling me the truth, . . . the truth of the hour . . . of a moment of fever and excitement; but this new world, which appears dimly to you now,—this ideal world in which you desire to seek an eternal refuge against mere transient evils—would never keep all it seems to promise. Disappointment, regret, misery await you within it . . . and do not await you alone. I know not if there be a man gifted with a sufficiently noble mind, with a sufficiently lofty soul to make you love the new existence of which you are dreaming, to preserve in the reality the almost divine character which your imagination imparts to it; but I do know that such a task, sweet as it might be, is beyond my strength; I would be insane, I would be a wretch, if I were to accept it."

"Is that your final decision? Cannot reflection alter it in any way?"

"In no way."

“Farewell then, sir. . . . Ah! unhappy woman that I am! . . . Farewell! . . .”

She grasped my hand, which she wrung convulsively, and then left me.

After she had disappeared, I sat down on the bench, upon which she had been seated. There, my poor Paul, my whole strength gave way. I hid my head in my hands and I wept like a child.—Thank God, she did not return!

I had at last to gather all my courage in order to appear once more and for a moment in the ball-room. There was nothing to indicate that my absence had been noticed, or unfavorably commented upon. Madame de Palme was dancing and displaying a degree of gayety amounting almost to delirium. Soon after, supper was announced, and I availed myself of the general commotion attending that incident, to retire to my room.

Early this morning, I requested a private interview of Madame de Malouet. It appeared to me that my entire confidence was due to her. She heard me with profound sadness, but without manifesting any surprise.

“I had guessed,” she told me, “something of the kind. . . . I did not sleep all night. I believe that you have done your duty as a wise man and as an honest man. Yes, you have. Still, it seems very hard. Society life is detestable in this, that it creates factitious characters and passions, unexpected situations, subtle shades, which complicate strangely the practice of duty, and obscure the straight path which ought to be always simple and easy to discover.—And now you wish to leave, I suppose?”

“Certainly, madame.”

“Very well; but you had better stay two or three days

longer. You will thus remove from your departure the semblance of flight which, after what may have been observed, might prove somewhat ridiculous and perhaps damaging. It is a sacrifice I ask of you. To-day, we are all to dine at Madame de Breuilly's: I'll undertake to excuse you. In this manner, this day at least will rest lightly upon you. To-morrow, we'll act for the best. Day after to-morrow, you can leave."

I accepted these terms. I shall soon see you again, then, Paul. But in the meantime, how lonely and forsaken I feel! How I long to grasp your firm and loyal hand; to hear your voice tell me: "You have done right!"

VIII.

ROZEL, OCTOBER 10TH.

HERE I am back in my cell, my friend. Why did I ever leave it? Never has a man felt a more troubled heart beat between these cold walls, than my own wretched heart! Ah! I will not curse our poor human reason, our wisdom, our philosophy; are they not, after all, the noblest and best conquests of our nature. But, great Heaven! how little they amount to! What unreliable guides, and what feeble supports!

Listen to a sad story.—Yesterday, thanks to Madame de Malouet, I remained alone at the chateau the whole day and the whole evening. I was therefore as much at peace as it was possible for me to be. Towards midnight

I heard the carriages returning, and soon after all noise ceased. It was, I think, about three o'clock in the morning when I was aroused from the species of torpor that has stood me in lieu of sleep for the past few nights, by the sound, quite close to me, of a door cautiously opened or closed in the yard. I know not by what strange and sudden connection of ideas so simple an incident attracted my attention and disturbed my mind. I left abruptly the arm-chair in which I had been slumbering, and I went up to a window. I distinctly saw a man moving off with discreet steps in the direction of the avenue. I had no difficulty in satisfying myself that the door through which he had just passed, was that which gives access to the wing of the chateau contiguous to the library. This part of the house contains several rooms devoted to transient guests; I knew that they were all vacant at this moment, —unless Madame de Palme, as it often happened, had occupied for the night the lodging that was always set apart for her in that wing.

You may guess what strange thought floated across my brain. I repelled it at first as sheer madness; but remembering, within the field of my somewhat extended experience, certain facts that lent probability to that thought, I entertained it with a sort of cynical irony, and I was almost ready to admit it, as an odious but decisive dénouement. The early dawn found me struggling still in this mental anguish, calling up my recollections, examining in a childish way the most minute circumstances that might tend to confirm or to banish my suspicions. Excess of fatigue, brought on at last two hours of prostration, from which I emerged with a better command of my reason. It was impossible for me to doubt the reality

of the apparition that had struck my eyes during the night; but it appeared to me that I had put upon it a hasty and senseless construction, and that my ailing spirit had attributed to it the least likely explanation.

I went down at half past ten o'clock as usual. Madame de Palme was in the parlor; she must therefore have spent the night at the chateau. Nevertheless, a mere glance at her was enough to remove from my mind the very shadow of suspicion. She was talking quietly in the centre of a group. She greeted me with her usual gentle smile. I felt relieved of an immense weight. I was escaping a torment of such painful and bitter nature, that the positive impression of my previous grief, freed from the disgraceful complications with which I had for a moment thought it aggravated, appeared almost pleasant. Never had my heart rendered to this woman a more tender and more sincere homage. I was grateful to her from the bottom of my soul, for having restored purity to my wound and to my memory.

The afternoon was to be devoted to a horseback ride along the sea-shore. In the effusion of heart that succeeded the anxieties of the night, I yielded quite readily to the entreaties of Monsieur de Malouet, who, arguing on my approaching departure, was urging me to accompany him on this excursion. It was about two o'clock when our cavalcade, recruited as usual among a few young men of the neighborhood, marched out of the chateau's gate. We had been travelling merrily for a few minutes, and I was not the least merry of the band, when Madame de Palme suddenly came to take place by my side.

"I am about to be guilty of a base deed," she said;

“and yet, I had so strongly resolved . . . but I am choking!”

I looked at her; the haggard expression of her eyes and of her features suddenly struck me with terror.

“Well!” she went on in a voice of which I shall never forget the tone, “you have willed it so! . . . I am a disgraced woman!”

She urged at once her horse forward, leaving me crushed by this blow, the more terrible that I had wholly ceased to fear it, and that it struck me with a keen cruelty I had not even foreseen. There had indeed been in the unhappy woman’s voice no trace whatever of insolent swaggering; it was the very voice of despair, a cry of heart-rending grief and timid reproach;—everything, that might add in my soul to the torture of a stained and shattered love, the disorder of a profound pity and an uneasy conscience.

When I had found strength enough to look around me I was surprised at my own blindness. Among Madame de Palme’s most assiduous courtiers, figures one Monsieur de Mauterne, whose antipathy for me, though confined within the limits of good-breeding, often seemed to me to assume an almost hostile tinge. Monsieur de Mauterne is a man of my age, tall, blonde, with a figure more robust than elegant, and features regularly handsome, but stiff and without expression. He possesses social accomplishments, much audacity, and no wit. His bearing and his conduct during the course of that fatal ride would have informed me from the start, if I had only thought of observing them, that he believed he had the right of fearing henceforth no rivalry near Madame de Palme. He assumed frankly the leading part in all the

scenes in which she participated ; he overwhelmed her with attentions, affected to speak to her in a whisper, and neglected nothing, in a word, to initiate the public into the secret of his success. In that respect, he lost his trouble ; the world, after exhausting its wickedness upon imaginary errors, seems thus far to refuse the evidence which vainly stares it in the face.

As to myself, my friend, it would be difficult to depict the chaos of emotions and thoughts that tossed and tumbled in my brain. The feeling that swayed me perhaps with the greatest violence, was that of hatred against that man,—a feeling of implacable hatred, of eternal hatred. I was, however, more shocked and more distressed than surprised at the choice that had been made of him ; he had happened in the way, and he had been taken up with a sort of indifference and of scorn, as one picks up any weapon to commit suicide with, when once the suicide has been resolved upon. As to my feelings towards her, you may guess them ; not a shadow of anger, frightful sadness, tender compassion, vague remorse, and above all, passionate, furious regret ! I realized at last how much I had loved her ! I could scarcely understand the motives which, two days before, had appeared to me so powerful, so imperative, and which had seemed to raise between her and me an insurmountable barrier. All these obstacles of the past disappeared before the abyss of the present which seemed the only real one, the only one that was impossible to overcome, the only one that ever existed. Strange fact ! I could see clearly, as clearly as I saw the sun, that the impossible, the irreparable was there, and I could not accept it, I could not submit to it. I could see that woman lost to me as irrevoca-

bly as if the grave had closed over her coffin, and I could not give her up! My mind wandered through insane projects and resolutions; I thought of picking a quarrel with Monsieur de Mauterne, and compelling him to fight on the spot. I felt that I would have crushed him! . . . Then I thought of fleeing with her, of marrying her, of taking her with her shame, after having refused her pure! . . . Yes, this madness tempted me! To remove it from my thoughts, I had to repeat a hundred times to myself that mutual disgust and despair were the only fruits that could ever be expected of that union of a dishonored hand with a bloody hand. Ah! Paul, how much I did suffer!

Madame de Palme manifested during the entire course of our ride a feverish excitement which betrayed itself more particularly in reckless feats of horsemanship. I heard at intervals her loud bursts of merriment, that sounded to my ears like heart-rending wails. Once again she spoke to me as she was going by:

“I inspire you with horror, don’t I?” she said.

I shook my head and dropped my eyes without replying.

We returned to the chateau at about four o'clock. I was making my way to my room when a confused tumult of voices, shrieks, and hurried steps in the vestibule chilled my heart. I went down again in all haste, and I was informed that Madame de Palme had just been taken with a violent nervous fit. She had been carried into the parlor. I recognized through the door the grave and gentle voice of Madame de Malouet, to which was mingled I know not what moan, like that of a sick child. I ran away.

I was resolved to leave this fatal spot without further

delay. Nothing could have induced me to remain a moment longer. Your letter, which had been handed to me on our return, served me as a likely pretext for my sudden departure. The friendship that binds us is well-known here. I said you needed me within twenty-four hours. I had taken care, at all hazards, to send three days before to the nearest town for a carriage and horses. In a few minutes my preparations were made; I gave orders to the driver to start ahead and wait for me at the extremity of the avenue while I was taking my leave. Monsieur de Malouet seemed to have no suspicion of the truth; the worthy old gentleman appeared quite moved as he received my thanks, and really manifested for me a singular affection out of all proportion to the brief duration of our acquaintance. I had to be scarcely less thankful to M. de Breuilly. I regret now the caricature I once gave you as the portrait of that noble heart.

Madame de Malouet insisted upon accompanying me down the avenue a few steps farther than her husband. I felt her arm trembling under mine while she was intrusting me with a few trifling errands for Paris. At the moment of parting, and as I was pressing her hand with effusion, she detained me gently:

"Well! sir," she said in a feeble voice, "God did not bless our wisdom."

"Our hearts are open to him, madame; He must have read our sincerity. He sees how much I am suffering, and I humbly hope he may forgive me!"

"Do not doubt it—do not doubt it," she replied in a broken voice; "but she? she!—ah! poor child!"

"Have pity on her, madame. Do not forsake her. Farewell!"

I left her hastily, and I started, but instead of going direct to the town, I had myself driven along the Abbey road as far as the top of the hills; I requested the coachman to go on alone to the town, and to return for me to-morrow morning early at the same place. I cannot explain to you, my dear friend, the singular and irresistible fancy that took me to spend one last night in that solitude where I spent such quick and happy days, and so recently, *mon Dieu!*”

Here I am, then, back in my cell. How cold, dark, and gloomy it seems! The sky also has gone into mourning. Since my arrival in this neighborhood, and in spite of the season, I had seen none but summer days and nights. To-night a cold autumnal storm has burst over the valley; the wind howls among the ruins, blowing off fragments that fall heavily upon the ground. A driving rain is pattering against my window-panes. It seems to me as if it were raining tears!

Tears! my heart is overflowing with them—and not a single one will rise to my eyes. And yet, I have prayed, I have long prayed to God—not, my friend to that intangible God whom we pursue in vain beyond the stars and the worlds, but the only God truly kind and helpful to suffering humanity,—the God of my childhood, the God of that poor woman!

Ah! I wish to think only now of my approaching meeting with you, the day after to-morrow, dear friend, and perhaps before this letter—

Come, Paul! If you can leave your mother, come, I beseech you, come to uphold me. God's hand is upon me!

I was writing that interrupted line when, in the midst

of the confused noises of the tempest, I fancied I heard the sound of a voice, of a human groan. I rushed to my window ; I leaned outside to pierce the darkness, and I discovered lying upon the dark and drenched soil a vague form, something like a white bundle. At the same time, a more distinct moan rose up to me. A gleam of the terrible truth flashed through my brain like a keen blade. I groped through the darkness as far as the door of the mill ; near the threshold, stood a horse bearing a side-saddle. I ran madly around to the other side of the ruins, and within the inclosure situated beneath the window of my cell, and which still retains some traces of the former cemetery of the monks, I found the unhappy creature. She was there, sitting on an old tomb-stone, as if overwhelmed, shivering in all her limbs under the chilling torrent of rain which a pitiless sky was pouring without interruption over her light party-dress. I seized her two hands, trying to raise her up.

" Ah ! unhappy child ! what have you done ! "

" Yes, most unhappy ! " she murmured, in a voice as faint as a breath.

" But you are killing yourself. "

" So much the better—so much the better ! "

" You cannot remain there !—Come !—"

I saw that she was unable to stand up alone.

" Ah ! *Dieu bon ! Dieu puissant !* what shall I do ? What's to become of you now ? What do you wish with me ? "

She made no reply. She was trembling, and her teeth were chattering. I lifted her up in my arms and I carried her in. The mind works fast in such moments. No conceivable means of removing her from this valley

where carriages cannot penetrate; nothing was henceforth possible to save her honor; I must only think of her life. I scaled rapidly the steps leading to my cell, and I laid her on a chair in front of the chimney in which I hastily kindled a fire; then I woke up my hosts. I gave to the miller's wife a vague and confused explanation. I know not how much of it she understood; but she is a woman, she took pity and went on bestowing upon Madame de Palme such care as was in her power. Her husband started at once on horseback, carrying to Madame de Malouet the following note from me:

“MADAME,—She is here, dying. In the name of the God of mercy, I beseech you, I implore you—come to console, come to bless her who can no longer expect words of kindness and forgiveness from any one but you in this world.

“Pray tell Madame de Pontbrian whatever you think proper.”

She was calling me. I returned to her side. I found her still seated before the fire. She had refused to be put into the bed that had been prepared for her. When she saw me—singular womanly preoccupation!—her first thought was for the coarse peasant's dress she had just exchanged for her own water-soaked and mud-stained garments. She laughed as she called my attention to it; but her laughter soon turned into convulsions which I had much difficulty in quieting.

I had placed myself close to her; she could not get warm; she had a consuming fever, her eyes glistened. I

begged her to consent to take the absolute rest which was alone suitable to her condition.

“What is the use?” she replied. “I am not ill. It is not the fever that is killing me, nor the cold, it is the thought that is burning me there;”—she touched her forehead—“it is shame—it is your scorn and your hatred; now, alas! but too well deserved!”

My heart overflowed then, Paul; I told her everything; my passion, my regrets, my remorse! I covered with kisses her trembling hands, her cold forehead, her damp hair. I poured into her poor shattered soul all the tenderness, all the pity, all the adoration a man’s soul can contain! She knew now that I loved her; she could not doubt it!

She listened to me with rapture. “Now,” she said, “now, I am no longer to be pitied. I have never been so happy in all my life. I did not deserve it—I have nothing further to wish—nothing further to hope—I shall not regret anything.”

She fell into a slumber. Her parted lips are smiling a pure and placid smile; but she is taken at intervals with terrible spasms, and her features are becoming terribly altered. I am watching her while writing these lines.

Madame de Malouet has just arrived with her husband. I had judged her rightly! Her voice and her words were those of a mother. She had taken care to bring her physician. The patient is lying in a comfortable bed, surrounded by loving and attentive friends. I feel more easy, although she has just awakened with a fearful delirium.

Madame de Pontbrian has positively refused to come

to her niece. I had judged her rightly too, the excellent Christian !

I have deemed it my duty not to set foot again in the cell which Madame de Malouet no longer leaves. The expression of M. de Malouet's countenance terrifies me, and yet he assures me that the physician has not yet pronounced.

The doctor has just come out ; I have spoken to him.

"It is pneumonia," he told me, "complicated with brain fever."

"It is very serious, is it not?"

"Very serious."

"But is there any immediate danger?"

"I'll tell you that to-night. Her condition is so acute that it cannot last long. Either the crisis must abate or nature must yield."

"You have no hope, sir?"

He looked up to heaven and went off.

I know not what is going on within me, my friend—all these blows are striking me in such rapid succession. It is the lightning !

FIVE O'CLOCK P.M.

The old priest whom I have often met at the chateau has been sent for in haste. He is a friend of Madame de Malouet, a simple old man, full of charity ; I dared not question him. I know not what is going on. I fear to hear, and yet my ear catches eagerly the least noises, the most insignificant sounds : a closing door, a rapid step on the stairs strike me dumb with terror. And yet—so quick ! it seems impossible !

Paul, my friend—my brother! where are you?—all is over!

An hour ago I saw the doctor and the priest coming down. M. de Malouet was following them.

“Go up,” he told me. “Come, courage, sir. Be a man!”

I walked into the cell; Madame de Malouet had remained alone there; she was kneeling by the bedside and beckoned me to approach. I gazed upon her who was about to cease suffering. A few hours had been enough to stamp upon that lovely face all the ravages of death; but life and thought still lingered in her eyes; she recognized me at once.

“Monsieur,” she began; then, after a pause: “George, I have loved you much. Forgive my having embittered your life with the memory of this sad incident!”

I fell on my knees; I tried to speak, I could not; my tears flowed hot and fast upon her hand already cold and inert as a piece of marble.

“And you, too, madame,” she added; “forgive me the trouble I have given you—the grief I am causing you now.”

“My child!” said the old lady, “I bless you from the bottom of my heart.”

Then there was a pause, in the midst of which I suddenly heard a deep and broken breath—ah! that supreme breath, that last sob of a deadly sorrow; God also has heard it, has received it!

He has heard it—He hears also my ardent, my weeping prayer! I must believe that He does, my friend. Yes, that I may not yield at this moment to some temptation of despair, I must firmly believe in a God who

loves us, who looks with compassionate eyes upon the anguish of our feeble hearts—who will deign some day to tie again with His paternal hand the knots broken by cruel death!—ah! in presence of the lifeless remains of a beloved being, what heart so withered, what brain so blighted by doubt, as not to repel forever the odious thought that these sacred words: God, Justice, Love, Immortality,—are but vain syllables devoid of meaning!

Farewell, Paul. You know what there still remains for me to do. If you can come, I expect you; if not, my friend, expect me. Farewell!

IX.

THE MARQUIS DE MALOUE TO M. PAUL B——, PARIS.

CHATEAU DE MALOUE, *October 20th.*

MONSIEUR,

It has become my imperative though painful duty to relate to you the facts which have brought about the crowning disaster of which you have already been advised, by more rapid means and with such precautions as we were able to take; a disaster that completely overwhelms our souls already so cruelly tried. As you are aware, sir, a few weeks, a few days had been sufficient to enable Madame de Malouet and myself to know and appreciate your friend, to conceive for him an eternal affection soon, alas! to be changed into eternal regret. You are also

aware, I know, of all the sad circumstances that preceded and led to this sad catastrophe.

Monsieur George's conduct during the melancholy days that followed the death of Madame de Palme, the depth of feeling as well as the elevation of soul which he constantly manifested, had completely won our hearts over to him. I desired to send him back to you at once, sir; I wished to get him away from this sorrowful spot, I wished to take him to you myself, since a painful preoccupation detained you in Paris; but he had imposed upon himself the duty of not forsaking so soon what was left of the unhappy woman.

We had removed him to our house; we were surrounding him with attentions. He never left the chateau, except to go each day on a pious pilgrimage within a few steps. Still, his health was perceptibly failing. Day before yesterday morning, Madame de Malouet pressed him to join Monsieur de Breuilly and myself in a horseback ride. He consented, though somewhat reluctantly. We started. On the way, he strove manfully to respond to the efforts we were making to draw him into conversation and rouse him from his prostration. I saw him smile for the first time in many hours, and I began to hope that time, the strength of his soul, the attentions of friendship, might restore some calm to his memory, when, at a turn in the road, a deplorable chance brought us face to face with Monsieur de Mauterne.

This gentleman was on horseback; two friends and two ladies made up his party. We were following the same direction, but his gait was much more rapid than ours; he passed us, saluting as he did so, and I noticed, so far as I am concerned, nothing in his manner that could attract

attention. I was therefore much surprised to hear M. de Breuilly the next moment murmur between his teeth: "That is an infamous trick!" Monsieur George, who, at the moment of meeting, had become pale and turned his head slightly away, looked sharply at Monsieur de Breuilly:

"What do you mean, sir? What do you refer to?"

"I refer to the impertinence of that brainless fool!"

I appealed energetically to Monsieur de Breuilly, reproaching him with his quarrelsome disposition, and affirming that there had been no trace of defiance either in the attitude or the features of Monsieur de Mauterne when he had passed by us.

"Come, my friend," said Monsieur de Breuilly, "your eyes must have been closed—or else you must have seen, as I saw myself, that the wretch giggled as he looked at our friend. I don't know why you should wish the gentleman to suffer an insult which neither you nor I would suffer!"

These unlucky words had been scarce uttered, when Monsieur George started his horse at a gallop.

"Are you mad?" I said to Breuilly, who was trying to detain us; "and what means such an invention?"

"My friend," he replied, "it was necessary to divert that boy's mind at any cost."

I shrugged my shoulders. I freed myself from him and dashed after M. George; but, being better mounted than myself, he had already gained a considerable advance. I was still a hundred paces behind him when he overtook Monsieur de Mauterne, who had stopped on hearing him coming. It seemed to me that they were exchanging a few words, and almost at once I saw M. George's whip

lashing several times, and with a sort of fury, Monsieur de Maunterne's face. We barely arrived in time, Monsieur de Breuilly and myself, to prevent that scene from assuming an odious character of brutality.

A meeting having unfortunately become inevitable between the parties, we took with us the two friends who accompanied Maunterne, Messieurs de Quiroy and Astley, the latter an Englishman. M. George had preceded us to the chateau. The choice of weapons belonged without any possible doubt to our adversary. Nevertheless, having noticed that his seconds seemed to hesitate with a sort of indifference, or perhaps of circumspection between swords and pistols, I thought that we might, with a little good management, influence their decisions in the direction least unfavorable to us. We went therefore, Monsieur de Breuilly and I, to consult M. George on the subject. He pronounced at once in favor of swords.

"But," remarked M. de Breuilly, "you are a very good pistol-shot. I have seen you at work. Are you certain to be a better swordsman? Do not deceive yourself; this will be a mortal combat."

"I am satisfied of that," he replied with a smile; "but I am particularly anxious for swords, if at all possible."

After the expression of so formal a wish, we could but esteem ourselves fortunate in obtaining the choice of that arm, and the meeting was settled for the next morning at nine o'clock.

During the remainder of the day, M. George manifested an ease of mind, and even at intervals a certain gayety, at which we were quite surprised, and which Madame de Malouet, in particular, was at a loss to understand. My

poor wife, of course, had been left in ignorance of these recent events.

At ten o'clock he retired, and I could still see a light through his window two hours later. Impelled by my earnest affection and I know not what vague anxiety that was haunting me, I entered his room at about midnight; I found him very calm; he had been writing and was just sealing up a few envelopes.

"There!" he said, handing me the papers. "Now the worst is over, and I am going to sleep the sleep of the just."

I thought it best to offer him a few more technical suggestions on the handling of the weapon he was soon to use. He listened to me without much attention, and suddenly extending his arm:

"Feel my pulse," he said.

I did so, and ascertained that his calm and his cheerfulness were neither affected nor feverish.

"In such a condition," he added, "if a man is killed it is because he is willing to be. Good-night, my dear sir!" Whereupon I left him.

Yesterday morning, at half-past eight, we repaired, M. George, M. de Breuilly, and myself, to an unfrequented path situated about half-way between Mauterne and Malouet, and which had been selected for the duelling-ground. Our adversary arrived almost immediately after, accompanied by Messieurs de Quiroy and Astley. The nature of the insult admitted of no attempt at conciliation. We had therefore to proceed at once to the fight.

Scarce had M. George placed himself in position, when we became convinced of his complete inexperience in the use of the sword. M. de Breuilly cast upon me a look of

stupor. However, after the blades had been crossed, there was a semblance of fight and of defence ; but at the third pass, M. George fell pierced through the chest.

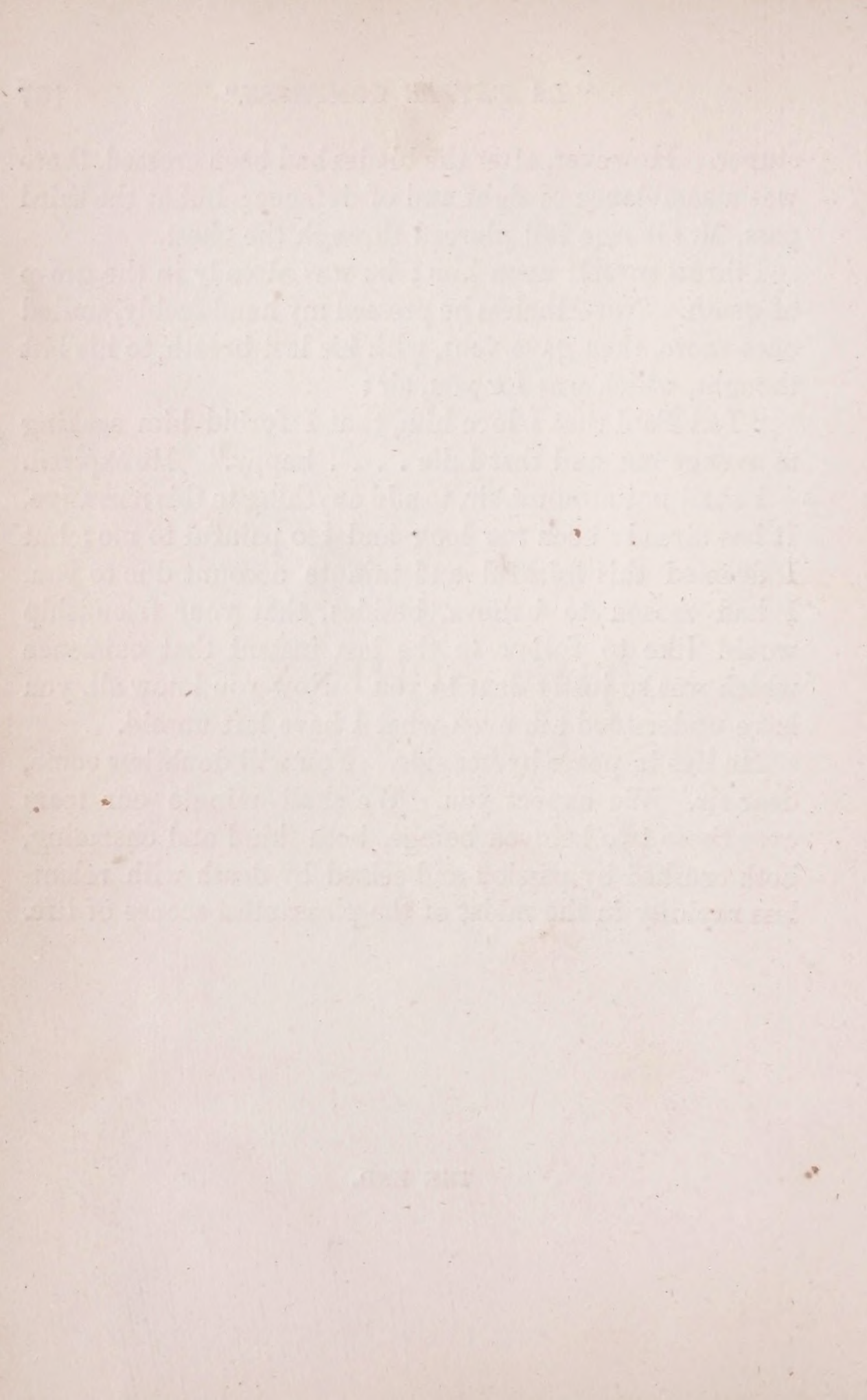
I threw myself upon him ; he was already in the grasp of death. Nevertheless he pressed my hand feebly, smiled once more, then gave vent, with his last breath, to his last thought, which was for you, sir :

“Tell Paul that I love him, that I forbid him seeking to avenge me, and that I die happy.” He expired.

I shall not attempt, sir, to add anything to this narrative. It has already been too long and too painful to me ; but I deemed this faithful and minute account due to you. I had reason to believe, besides, that your friendship would like to follow to the last instant that existence which was so justly dear to you. Now you know all, you have understood all, even what I have left unsaid.

He lies in peace by her side. You will doubtless come, dear sir. We expect you. We shall mingle our tears over those two beloved beings, both kind and charming, both crushed by passion and seized by death with relentless rapidity in the midst of the pleasantest scenes of life.

THE END.



THE SPHINX.

THE SPHINX;

OR,

“JULIA DE TRÉCŒUR.”

I.

ALL those who, like ourselves, knew Raoul de Trécœur during his early youth, believed that he was destined to great fame. He had received quite remarkable gifts from nature; there are left from him two or three sketches and a few hundred verses that promised a master; but he was very rich, and had been very badly brought up; he soon gave himself up to dilettantism. A perfect stranger, like most men of his generation, to the sentiment of duty, he permitted himself to be recklessly carried away by his instincts, which, fortunately for others, were more ardent than hurtful. Therefore was he generally pitied when he died, in the flower of his age, for having loved and enjoyed immoderately everything that he thought pleasant.

The poor fellow, they said, never did any harm but to himself; which, in point of fact, was not the exact truth. Trécœur had married, at the age of twenty-five, his

cousin Clotilde Andrée de Pers, a modest and graceful person who had of the world nothing but its elegance. Madame de Trécœur had lived with her husband in an atmosphere of unhealthy storms, where she felt out of place, and, as it were, degraded. He tormented her with his remorse almost as much as he did with his faults. He looked upon her, and justly, as an angel, and wept at her feet when he had betrayed her, lamenting that he was unworthy of her; that he was the victim of his temperament, and that he had been born in a faithless age. He threatened once to kill himself in his wife's boudoir if she did not forgive him; she forgave him, of course. All this dramatic action disturbed Clotilde in her resigned existence. She would have preferred that her misery should have been more quiet and less declamatory.

All the friends of her husband had been in love with her, and had built great hopes upon her forlorn condition; but unfaithful husbands do not always make guilty wives. The reverse is rather more frequently the case, so little is this poor world submitted to the rules of logic. In short, Madame de Trécœur, after her husband's death, was left upon the breach, exhausted and broken down, but spotless.

From this melancholy union, a daughter had been born, named Julia, and whom her father, notwithstanding all Clotilde's efforts of resistance, had spoilt to excess. Monsieur de Trécœur's idolatry for his daughter was well-known, and the world, with its habitual weakness of judgment, forgave him readily his scandalous existence in consideration of that merit, which is not always a great one. It is not, indeed, a very difficult matter to love one's children; it is sufficient for that not to be a monster.

The love that one has for them is not in itself a virtue : it is a passion which, like all others, may be good or bad, as one is its master or its slave. It may even be thought that there is no passion which may be more than this one, pregnant with good or with evil.

Julia seemed splendidly gifted ; but her ardent and precocious disposition had been developed, thanks to the paternal education, as in the primeval forest, wholly at random. She was small in person, dark and pale, lithe and slender, with large blue eyes full of fire, unruly black hair, and superbly arched eyebrows. Her habitual air was reserved and haughty ; nevertheless she laid aside, at home, these majestic appearances to frolic on the carpet. She played games of her own invention. She translated her history lessons into little dramas interspersed with speeches to the people, dialogues, music, and particularly chariot-races. In spite of her serious countenance, she could be very funny at times, and made cruel fun of those she did not like.

She manifested for her father a passionate predilection, singularly mitigated by the sentiments of tender pity which her mother's unhappiness inspired in her youthful heart. She saw her weep often ; she would then throw herself upon the floor, curled up at her feet, and there remain for hours, motionless and dumb, looking at her with moist eyes, and drinking from time to time a tear from her cheek. She never asked her why she wept. She had apparently caught, as many children do, some echoes of the domestic woes. Doubtless her quick intellect appreciated her father's wrong-doings ; but her father—that handsome gentleman, so witty, generous, and wild—she worshipped him ; she was proud to be his daugh-

ter; she palpitated with joy when he clasped her to his heart. She could neither judge him nor blame him: he was a superior being. She contented herself with pitying and consoling, as best she could, that gentle and charming creature who was her mother, and who suffered.

Within the circle of Madame de Trécœur's acquaintances, Julia simply passed for a little plague. The *dear madames*, as she called them, who formed the ornament of her mother's Thursdays, related with bitterness to each other the scenes of comical imitation with which the child followed their entrance and their departure. The men considered themselves fortunate when they did not carry off a bit of paper or silk on the back of their coats. All this amused Monsieur de Trécœur extremely. When his daughter performed with half a dozen chairs some of those Olympian races that knocked every piano in the neighborhood out of tune:

"Julia!" he would exclaim, "you don't make noise enough. Smash a vase."

And a vase she did smash; whereupon her father kissed her with enthusiasm.

This method of education assumed a graver character as the child grew older. Her father's affection became shaded with a species of gallantry. He took her with him to the Bois, to the races, to the theatre. She had not a fancy that he did not anticipate and gratify. At thirteen years of age, she had her horse, her groom, a carriage bearing her monogram. Already ill, and having perhaps a presentiment of his death, the unfortunate man overwhelmed that beloved daughter with the tokens of his baleful affection. He was thus blunting all her tastes

by too precocious satiety, as if he had intended to leave her no taste save for the forbidden fruit.

Julia wept over him with furious transports, and preserved for his memory a fervid worship. She had a private room which she filled with the portraits of her father and with a thousand personal souvenirs, around which she kept up flowers.

Madame de Trécœur, like the greater number of young girls who marry their cousins, had married very young. She was left a widow at twenty-eight, and her mother, the Baroness de Pers, who was still living, and who was even of the liveliest, was not long in suggesting discreetly to her the propriety of a second marriage. After having exhausted the practical and, in fact, quite sensible reasons that seemed to urge that course, the baroness then came down to the sentimental reasons :

“In good faith, my poor child,” she said, “you have not had, up to this time, your just share of happiness in this world. I would not speak ill of your husband, since he is dead ; but, *entre nous*, he was a horrid brute. Mon Dieu ! charming at times, I grant you,—since I have been caught myself,—like all worthless scamps ! but in fact, beastly, beastly ! Well, certainly, I shall not undertake to say that marriage is ever a state of perfect bliss ; nevertheless it is the best thing that has been imagined up this time, to enjoy life decently among respectable people. You are in the flower of your age—you are quite good-looking, quite—and, by the way, it will do you no harm to wear your skirts a little higher up behind, with a proper sort of bustle ; for you don’t even know what they wear now, my poor pet. Here, look ! It’s horrible, I know ; but what can we do ? we must not attract atten-

tion. In short, what I meant to tell you is that you still have all that is necessary, and even more than is necessary, to fix a husband—if indeed there are any that can be fixed, which I hope is the case—otherwise, we should have to despair wholly of Providence, if it did not have some compensation in store for us after all our trials. It is already a manifest sign of its kindness that you should have recovered your *embonpoint*, my darling! Kiss your mother. Come, now, when is our pretty little woman going to be married?”

There was no maternal exaggeration whatever in the compliments which the baroness was addressing to Clotilde. All Paris looked upon her with the same eyes as her mother. She had never been so attractive as now, and she had always been infinitely so. Her person, reposed in the peace of her mourning, had then the bright lustre of a fine fruit, ripe and fresh. Her black eyes full of timid tenderness, her pure brow crowned with splendid and life-like braids, her shoulders of rosy marble, her particular grace of a young matron, at once handsome, loving, and chaste,—all that, joined to a spotless reputation and to sixty thousand francs a year, could not fail to bring forward more than one pretender. And indeed they sprang up in legions. Reason, and public opinion itself, which had done full justice to her husband and to herself, were both urging her to a second wedding. Her own private feelings, whatever might be their natural delicacy, did not seem likely to prove an obstacle, for there was nothing in her heart that was not true. She had been faithful to her husband, she had shed sincere and bitter tears over that wretched companion of her youth; but he had exhausted and worn out her affec-

tion, and, without ever joining her mother in her posthumous recriminations against Monsieur de Trécœur, she felt that she had no further duty to fulfil toward him but that of prayer.

She had, however, been for many months a widow, and she still continued to oppose to the solicitations of the baroness, a resistance of which the latter sought in vain to ascertain the mysterious cause. One day she fancied she had discovered it.

"Confess the truth," she said to her; "you are afraid to cause some annoyance to Julia. Now, if that is so, my dear daughter, it is pure folly. You cannot have any serious scruple on that score. Julia will be very rich in her own right, and will have no need of your fortune. She will herself marry in three or four years (much pleasure do I wish her husband, by the way!); and see a little in what nice situation you will find yourself then! But, *mon Dieu!* are we never going to be done with them? After the father, here is the daughter now! Eh! *mon Dieu!* let her erect chapels with her father's portraits and spurs as much as she likes—that's her business; I am certainly not the one to enter into competition with her. But she must at least allow us to live in peace! What! You could not dispose of your person without her leave! Then if you are her slave, my dear child, show me the door at once! You could not do anything more agreeable to her, for she cannot bear the sight of me, your daughter! And then, after all, in all candor, what possible objection can she have to your getting married again? A step-father is not a step-mother; it's quite another thing. Eh! *mon Dieu!* her step-father will be charming to her,—all men will be charming to her: I pre-

dict her that ; she may feel easy about it !—Now, will you admit that that it is the true cause of your hesitation ? ”

“ I assure you that it is not, mother,” said Clotilde.

“ I assure you that it is, my daughter. Well, come ; would you like me to speak to Julia, to try and reason with her ?—I would prefer giving her a good whipping ; however—!”

“ Poor, dear mother,” rejoined Clotilde, “ must I then tell you everything ? ”

She came to kneel down in front of the baroness.

“ By all means, daughter ; tell me everything, but don’t make me cry, I beg of you ! Is what you have to tell very sad ? ”

“ Not very gay.”

“ Mon Dieu ! But no matter ; go on.”

“ In the first place, mother, I must confess that I would personally feel no scruple in marrying again—”

“ I should think not ! That would be carrying it just a little too far ! ”

“ As to Julia—whom I adore, who loves me sincerely, and who loves you very much too, whatever you may say—”

“ Satisfied of the contrary,” said the baroness. “ But no matter ; proceed.”

“ As to Julia, I have more confidence than you have in her good sense and in her good heart ; notwithstanding the exalted affection she has preserved for her father, I am sure that she would understand, that she would respect my determination, and that she would not love me one whit the less, especially if her step-father did not happen to be personally objectionable to her ; for you are aware of the extreme violence of her sympathies and of her antipathies—”

"I am aware of it!" said the baroness bitterly. "Well you must give her a list of your gentlemen friends, the dear little thing, and she will pick out her own choice for you."

"There is no need of that, good mother," said Clotilde. "The choice has already been made by the mainly interested party, and I am certain that it would not be disagreeable to Julia."

"Well, then, my darling, everything is for the best."

"Alas! no. I am going to tell you something that covers me with confusion. Among all the men we know, the only one who—the only one I like, in fact, is also the only one who has never been in love with me."

"He must be a savage, then! he cannot but be a savage. But who is he?"

"I have told you, dear mother, the only one of our friends who is not in love with me—"

"Bah! who is that? Your cousin Pierre?"

"No, but you are not—"

"Monsieur de Lucan!" exclaimed the baroness. "It could not fail to be so! The very flower of the flock! Mon Dieu, my darling, how very similar our tastes are, both of us! He is charming, your Lucan, he is charming. Kiss me, dear—don't look any farther, don't look any farther; he is positively just the man for us."

"But, mother, since he does not want me!"

"Good! he does not want you now! What nonsense! what do you know about it? Did you ask him? Besides, it is impossible, my darling; you were made for each other in all eternity. He is charming, *distingué*, well-bred, rich, intelligent, everything, in a word—everything."

“Everything, mother, except in love with me.”

The baroness exclaiming anew against such a very unlikely thing, Clotilde exposed to her eyes a series of facts and particulars which left no room for illusions. The dismayed mother was compelled to resign herself to the painful conviction that there really was in the world a man of sufficiently bad taste not to be in love with her daughter, and that this man unfortunately was Monsieur de Lucan.

She returned slowly to her residence, meditating on the way upon that strange mystery the explanation of which, however, she was not long to await.

II.

GEORGE-RENÉ DE LUCAN was an intimate friend of the Count Pierre de Moras, Clotilde's cousin. They had been companions in boyhood, in youth, in travels, and even in battle; for, chance having led them to the United-States at the outbreak of the war of the rebellion, they had deemed it a favorable opportunity to receive the baptism of fire. Their friendship had become still more sternly tempered in the midst of these dangers of warfare sustained fraternally far from their own country. That friendship had had, moreover, for a long time, a character of rare confidence, delicacy, and strength. They entertained the highest esteem for each other, and their mutual confidence was not misplaced. They, however,

bore no resemblance whatever to each other. Pierre de Moras was of tall stature, blonde as a Scandinavian, handsome and strong as a lion, but as a good-natured lion. Lucan was dark, slender, elegant, and grave. There was in his cold and gentle accent, in his very bearing, a certain grace mingled with authority, that was both imposing and charming.

They were not any less dissimilar in a moral point of view: the former a jolly companion, an absolute and settled skeptic, the careless possessor of a *danseuse*; the latter always agitated despite his outer calm, romantic, passionate, tormented with love and theology. Pierre de Moras, on their return from America, had presented Lucan to his cousin Clotilde, and from that moment there were at least two points upon which they agreed perfectly: profound esteem for Clotilde, and deep-seated antipathy for her husband.

They appreciated, however, each in his own way, Monsieur de Trécœur's character and conduct. For the Count Pierre, Trécœur was simply a mischievous being; in Monsieur de Lucan's eyes, he was a criminal.

"Why criminal?" Pierre said. "Is it his fault if he was born with the flames of hell in the marrow of his bones? I admit that I feel quite disposed to break his head when I see Clotilde's eyes red; but I would not feel any more angry about it, than if I were crushing a serpent under my heel. Since it is his nature, the poor man can't help it."

"You inspire me with horror," Lucan rejoined. "That little system of yours would simply suppress all merit, all will, all liberty; in a word, the whole moral world. If we are not the masters of our own passions, at least to a

great extent, and if, on the contrary, it is our passions that fatally control us; if a man is necessarily good or, bad, honest or a knave, loyal or a traitor, at the mercy of his instincts, tell me, if you please, why you honor me with your esteem and your friendship? I have no right to them any more than any one else, any more than Trécœur himself."

"I beg your pardon, my friend," said Pierre gravely; "in the vegetable world I prefer a rose to a thistle; in the moral world, I prefer you to Trécœur. You were born a gallant fellow; I rejoice at it, and I make the best of it."

"Well, *mon cher*, you are laboring under a complete mistake," rejoined Lucan. "I was born, on the contrary, with the most detestable instincts, with the germ of all vices."

"Like Socrates?"

"Like Socrates, exactly. And if my father had not chastised me in time, if my mother had not been a saint, finally, if I had not myself placed, with the utmost energy, my will at the service of my conscience, I would be to-day, a faithless and lawless scoundrel."

"But nothing proves that you will not turn out a scoundrel one of these days, my dear friend. There is no one but may become a scoundrel at the proper time. Everything depends upon the extent and strength of the temptation. Whatever may be your instinct of honor and dignity, are you yourself quite sure never to meet with a temptation sufficiently powerful to overcome your principles? Can you not conceive, for instance, some circumstance in which you might love a woman enough to commit a crime?"

"No," said Lucan; "do you?"

"I!—I deserve no credit. I have no passions. It is extremely mortifying, but I have none. I was born to be an exemplary man. You remember my childhood: I was a little model. Now I am a big model, that's all the difference—and it does not cost me any effort whatever. Shall we go and see Clotilde?"

"Let us go!"

And they went to Clotilde's, very worthy herself of the friendship of these two excellent fellows. There they were received with marked consideration, even by Mademoiselle Julia, who seemed to feel, to a certain degree, the prestige of these superior natures. Both had, moreover, in their manners and their language an elegant correctness that apparently satisfied the child's delicate taste and her artistic instincts.

During the early period of her mourning, Julia's disposition had assumed a somewhat shy and sombre cast; when her mother received visitors, she left the parlor abruptly, and went to lock herself up in her own room, not, however, without manifesting towards the indiscreet guests a haughty displeasure. Cousin Pierre and his friend had alone the privilege of a kindly greeting; she even deigned to leave her apartment and come and join them at her mother's side when she knew that they were there.

Clotilde had therefore good reasons to believe that her preference for Monsieur de Lucan would obtain her daughter's approbation; she unfortunately had better ones still to doubt that Monsieur de Lucan's disposition corresponded with her own. Not only, indeed, had he always maintained towards her the terms of the most reserved

friendship, but, since she had been a widow, that reserve had become perceptibly aggravated. Lucan's visits became fewer and briefer; he even seemed to take particular care in avoiding all occasions of finding himself alone with Clotilde, as if he had penetrated her secret feelings, and had affected to discourage them. Such were the sadly significant symptoms which Clotilde had communicated in confidence to her mother.

On the very day when the baroness was receiving this unpleasant information at the residence of her daughter, a conversation was taking place upon the same subject between the Count de Moras and George de Lucan, in the latter's apartment. They had taken together, during the forenoon, a ride through the Bois, and Lucan had shown himself even more silent than usual. At the moment of parting:

"*A propos*, Pierre," he said, "I am tired of Paris; I am going to travel."

"Going to travel! Where on earth?"

"I am going to Sweden. I have always wished to see Sweden."

"What a singular thing!—Will you be gone long?"

"Two or three months."

"When do you expect to leave?"

"To-morrow."

"Alone?"

"Entirely so. I'll see you again at the club, to-night, won't I?"

The strange reserve of this dialogue left upon the mind of Monsieur de Moras an impression of surprise and uneasiness. He was unable to withstand the feeling, and two hours later he returned to Lucan's. As he went in,

preparations for travelling greeted his eyes on all sides. Lucan was engaged writing in his study.

“Now, my dear fellow!” said the count to him, “if I am impertinent, say so frankly and at once; but this sudden and hurried voyage doesn’t look like anything.—Seriously, what is the matter? Are you going to fight a duel outside the frontier?”

“Bah! In that case I should take you with me; you know that very well.”

“A woman, then?”

“Yes,” said Lucan dryly.

“Excuse my importunity, and good-by.”

“I have wounded your feelings, dear friend?” said Lucan, detaining him.

“Yes,” said the count, “I certainly do not pretend to enter into your secrets; but I do not absolutely understand the tone of restraint, and almost of hostility, in which you are answering me on the subject of this journey. It is not, moreover, the first symptoms of that nature that strike and grieve me; for some time past, I find you visibly embarrassed in your intercourse with me; it seems as though I were in your way and my friendship were a burden to you, and the cruel idea has occurred to my mind that this journey is merely a way of putting an end to it.”

“*Mon Dieu!*” murmured Lucan. “Well, then,” he went on with evident agitation in his voice, “I must tell you the whole truth; I hoped that you would have guessed it—it is so simple.—Your cousin Clotilde has now been a widow for nearly two years; that, I believe, is the term consecrated by custom to the mourning of a husband. I am aware of your feelings towards her; you may now

marry her, and you will be perfectly right in doing so. Nothing seems to me more just, more natural, more worthy of her and of yourself. I beg to assure you that my friendship for you shall remain faithful and entire, but I trust you will not object to my keeping away for a short time. That's all."

Monsieur de Moras seemed to have infinite difficulty in comprehending the meaning of this speech; he remained for several seconds after Lucan had ceased to speak, with wondering countenance and fixed gaze, as if trying to find the solution of a riddle; then rising abruptly and grasping both Lucan's hands:

"Ah! that's kind of you, that is!" he said with grave emotion.

And after another cordial grasp, he added gayly:

"But if you expect to stay in Sweden until I have married Clotilde, you may begin building and even planting there, for I swear to you that you shall stay long enough for either purpose."

"Is it possible that you do not love her?" said Lucan in a half whisper.

"I love her very much, on the contrary; I appreciate her, I admire her; but she is a sister to me, purely a sister. The most delightful thing about it, *mon cher*, is that it has always been my dream to have you and Clotilde marry; only you seemed to me so cold, so little attentive, so rebellious, particularly lately. Mon Dieu! how pale you are, George!"

The final result of this conversation was that Monsieur de Lucan, instead of starting for Sweden, called a little later to see the Baroness de Pers, to whom he exposed his aspirations, and who thought herself, as she listened to him,

in the midst of an enchanting dream. She had, however, beneath her frivolous manners too profound a sentiment of her own dignity and that of her daughter, to manifest in the presence of Monsieur de Lucan the joy that overwhelmed her. Whatever desire she might have felt of clasping immediately upon her heart this ideal son-in-law, she deferred that satisfaction and contented herself with expressing to him her personal sympathy. Appreciating, however, Monsieur de Lucan's just impatience, she advised him to call that very evening upon Madame de Trécœur, of whose personal sentiments she was herself ignorant, but who could not fail to meet his advances with the esteem and the consideration due to a man of his merit and standing. Being left alone, the baroness gave way to her feelings in a soliloquy mingled with tears; she, however, purposely omitted to notify Clotilde, preferring with her maternal taste to leave her the whole enjoyment of that surprise.

The heart of woman is an organ infinitely more delicate than ours. The constant exercise which they give it develops within it finer and subtler faculties than the dry masculine intellect can ever hope to possess; that accounts for their presentiments, less rare and more certain than ours. It seems as though their sensibility, always strained and vibrating, might be warned by mysterious currents of divine instinct, and that it guesses even before it can understand. Clotilde, when Monsieur de Lucan was announced, was, as it were, struck by one of these secret electric thrills, and in spite of all the objections to the contrary that beset her mind, she felt that she was loved, and that she was on the point of being told so. She sat down in her great arm-chair, drawing up with both hands the silk

of her dress, with the gesture of a bird that flaps its wings. Lucan's visible agitation further enlightened and delighted her. In such men, armed with powerful but sternly restrained passions, accustomed to control their own feelings, intrepid and calm, agitation is either frightful or charming.

After informing her—which was entirely useless—that his visit to her was one of unusual importance :

“Madame,” he added, “the request I am about to address you demands, I know, a well-matured answer. I will therefore beg of you not to give that answer to-day, the more so that it would indeed be too painful to me to hear it from your own lips if it were not a favorable one.”

“Mon Dieu ! monsieur !” said Clotilde faintly.

“The baroness, your mother, madame, whom I had the honor of seeing during the day, was kind enough to hold out some encouragement to me,—in a measure—and to permit me to hope that you might entertain some esteem for me, or at least that you had no prejudice against me. As to myself, madame, I—mon Dieu ! I love you, in a word, and I cannot imagine a greater happiness in the world than that which I would hold at your hands. You have known me for a long time ; I have nothing to tell you concerning myself. And now, I shall wait.”

She detained him with a sign of her hand, and tried to speak ; but her eyes filled with tears. She hid her face in her hands, and she murmured :

“Excuse me ! I have been so rarely happy ! I don't know what it is !”

Lucan got gently down upon his knees before her, and when their eyes met, their two hearts suddenly filled like two cups.

"Speak, my friend!" she resumed. "Tell me again that you love me. I was so far from thinking it! And why is it? And since when?"

He explained to her his mistake, his painful struggle between his love for her and his friendship for Pierre.

"Poor Pierre!" said Clotilde, "what an excellent fellow. But no, really!"

Then he made her smile by telling her what mortal terror and apprehension had taken possession of his soul at the moment when he was asking her to decide upon his fate; she had seemed to him, more than ever, at that moment, a lovely and sainted creature, and so much above him, that his pretension of being loved by her, of becoming her husband, had suddenly appeared to him as a pretension almost sacrilegious.

"O mon Dieu!" she said, "what an opinion have you formed of me, then? It's frightful! On the contrary, I thought myself too simple, too commonplace for you; I thought that you must be fond of romantic passions, of great adventures; you have somewhat the appearance of it, and even the reputation;—and I am so far from being a woman of that kind?"

Upon that slight invitation, he told her two words of his past life which had been full of trite excitement, and had afforded him nothing but disappointment and disgust. Never, however, before having met her, had the thought of marrying occurred to him; in the matter of love as in the matter of friendship, he had always had the imagination taken up with a certain ideal, somewhat romantic indeed, and he had feared never to find it in marriage. He might have looked for it elsewhere, in great adventures, as she said; but he loved order and dignity

in life, and he had the misfortune of being unable to live at war with his own conscience. Such had been his agitated youth.

“You ask me,” he went on with effusion, “why I love you. I love you because you alone have succeeded in harmonizing within my heart two sentiments which had hitherto struggled for its mastery at the cost of fearful anguish: honor and passion. Never before knowing you had I yielded to one of these sentiments without being made wretched by the other. They always seemed irreconcilable to me. Never had I yielded to passion without remorse; never had I resisted it without regret. Whether weak or strong, I have always been unhappy and tortured. You alone made me understand that I could love at once with all the ardor and all the dignity of my soul; and I selected you because you are affectionate and you are sincere; because you are handsome and you are pure; because there are embodied in you both duty and rapture, love and respect, intoxication and peace. Such is the woman, such is the angel you are to me, Clotilde.”

She listened to him half reclining, breathing in his words and manifesting in her eyes a sort of celestial surprise.

But it seems—who has not experienced it?—that human happiness cannot touch certain heights without drawing the lightning upon itself. Clotilde in the midst of her ecstasy shuddered suddenly and started to her feet. She had just heard a smothered cry, followed by the dull sound of a falling body. She ran, opened the door, and in the centre of the adjoining room saw Julia stretched upon the floor.

She supposed that the child at the moment of entering

the parlor had overheard some of their words, and that the thought of seeing her father's place occupied by another, striking her thus without warning, had stirred to its very depths that passionate young soul. Clotilde followed her into her room, where she had her carried, and expressed the wish of remaining alone with her. While lavishing upon her cares, caresses, and kisses, it was not without fearful anguish that she awaited her daughter's first glance. That glance fell upon her at first with vague uncertainty, then with a sort of wild stupor. The child pushed her away gently; she was trying to collect her ideas, and as the expression of her thought grew firmer in her eyes, her mother could plainly read in them a violent strife of opposing feelings.

"I beg of you, I beseech you, my darling daughter," murmured Clotilde, whose tears fell drop by drop upon the pale visage of the child.

Suddenly Julia seized her by the neck, drew her down upon herself, and kissing her passionately:

"You have hurt me much" she said, "oh! very much more than you can imagine; but I love you. I love you a great deal; I shall, I must always, I assure you."

She burst into sobs, and both wept long, closely clasped to each other.

In the meantime Monsieur de Lucan had deemed it advisable to send for the Baroness de Pers, whom he was entertaining in the parlor. The baroness on hearing what was going on had manifested more agitation than surprise.

"Mon Dieu!" she exclaimed, "I expected it fully, my dear sir. I did not tell you anything about it, because we hadn't got so far yet; but I expected it fully. That child

will kill my daughter. She will finish what her father has so well begun; for it is purely a miracle if my daughter, after all she has suffered, has been able to recover as far as you see. I must leave them together. I am not going in there. O mon Dieu! I am not going in there! In the first place, I would be afraid of annoying my daughter, and besides that would be entirely out of my character."

"How old is Mademoiselle Julia?" inquired Lucan, who retained under these painful circumstances his quiet courtesy.

"Why, she is almost fifteen, and I am not sorry for it, by the way, for, *entre nous*, we may reasonably hope to get honestly rid of her within a year or two. Oh! she will have no trouble in getting married, no trouble whatever, you may be sure. In the first place she is rich, and then, after all, she is a pretty monster, there is no gain-saying that, and there is no lack of men who admire that style."

Clotilde joined them at last. Whatever might have been her inward emotion, she appeared calm, having nothing theatrical in her ways. She replied simply, in a low and gentle voice, to her mother's feverish questions: she remained convinced that this misfortune would not have happened, if she could have herself informed Julia, with some precautions, of the event which chance had abruptly revealed to her. Addressing then a sad smile to Monsieur de Lucan:

"These family difficulties, sir," she said to him, "could not have formed a part of your anticipations, and I should deem it quite natural were they to lead to some modification of your plans."

An expressive anxiety became depicted upon Lucan's features. "If you ask me to restore you your freedom," he said, "I cannot but comply; if it is your delicacy alone that has spoken, I beg to assure you that you are still dearer to me since I have seen you suffer on my account, and suffer with so much dignity."

She held out her hand, which he seized, bowing low at the same time.

"I shall love your daughter so much," he said, "that she will forgive me."

"Yes, I hope so," said Clotilde; "nevertheless she wishes to enter a convent for a few months, and I have consented."

Her voice trembled and her eyes became moist.

"Excuse me, sir," she added; "I have no right as yet to make you participate to such an extent in my sorrows. May I beg of you to leave me alone with my mother?"

Lucan murmured a few words of respect, and withdrew. It was quite true, as he had said, that Clotilde was dearer to him than ever. Nothing had inspired him with such a lofty idea of the moral worth of that woman as her attitude during that trying evening. Stricken in the midst of her flight of happiness, she had fallen without a cry, without a groan, striving to hide her wound; she had manifested in his presence that exquisite modesty in suffering so rare among her sex. He was the more grateful to her for it, that he was deeply averse to those pathetic and turbulent demonstrations which most women never fail to eagerly exhibit on every occasion, when they are indeed kind enough not to bring them about.

III.

MONSIEUR DE LUCAN had been Clotilde's husband for several months when the rumor spread among society that Mademoiselle de Trécœur, formerly known as such an incarnate little devil, was about taking the veil in the convent of the Faubourg Saint Germain, to which she had withdrawn before her mother's marriage. That rumor was well founded. Julia had endured at first with some difficulty the discipline and the observances to which the simple boarders of the establishment were themselves bound to submit; then she had been gradually taken with a pious fervor, the excesses of which they had been compelled to moderate. She had begged her mother not to put an obstacle to the irresistible inclination which she felt for a religious life, and Clotilde had with difficulty obtained that she should adjourn her resolution until the accomplishment of her sixteenth year.

Madame de Lucan's relations with her daughter since her marriage had been of a singular character. She came almost daily to visit her, and always received the liveliest manifestations of affection at her hands; but on two points, and those the most sensitive, the young girl had remained inflexible: she had never consented either to return to the maternal roof, nor to see her mother's husband.

She had even remained for a long time without making the slightest allusion to Clotilde's altered situation, which she affected to ignore. One day, at last, feeling the intolerable torture of such a reserve, she

made up her mind, and fixing her flashing eyes upon her mother:

"Well, are you happy at least?" she said.

"How can I be," said Clotilde, "since you hate the man I love?"

"I hate no one," replied Julia dryly. "How is your husband?"

From that moment she inquired regularly after Monsieur de Lucan in a tone of polite indifference; but she never uttered without hesitation and evident discomfort the name of the man who had taken her father's place.

In the meantime she had reached her sixteenth year. Her mother's promise had been formal. Julia was henceforth free to follow her vocation, and she was preparing for it with an impatient ardor that edified the good ladies of the convent. Madame de Lucan expressing, one morning, in presence of her mother and her husband the anxiety that oppressed her heart during these last days of respite:

"As to me, my daughter," said the baroness, "I must confess that I am urging with all my wishes and prayers the moment which you seem to dread. The life you have been leading since your marriage has nothing human about it; but what forms its principal torment, is the constant struggle which you have to sustain against that child's obstinacy. Well, when she has become a nun, there will no longer be any struggle; the situation will be clearer; and note that you will not be in reality any more separated than you are now, since the house is not a cloister;—I would just as lief it were, myself; but it is not. And then, why oppose a vocation

which I really look upon as providential? In the interest of the child herself, you should congratulate yourself upon the resolution she has taken;—I appeal to your husband to say if that is not so. Come, let me ask you, my dear sir, what could be expected of such an organization, if she were once let loose upon the world? Why! she would be a dangerous character for society! You know what a head she has!—a volcano! And pray observe, my friend, that at this present moment she is a perfect odalisk. You have not seen her for some time; you cannot imagine how she has developed. I, who enjoy the treat of seeing her twice a week, I can positively assure you that she is a perfect odalisk, and, besides, divinely dressed. In fact, she is so well made! you might throw a window-curtain over her with a pitchfork, and she would look as if she were just coming out of Worth's! There, ask Pierre what he thinks about it, he, who has the honor of being admitted to her good graces!"

Monsieur de Moras, who was coming in at that very moment, shared, indeed, with a very limited number of friends of the family, the privilege of accompanying Clotilde occasionally during her visits to Julia's convent.

"Well, my good Pierre," resumed the baroness, "we were speaking of Julia, and I was telling my son-in-law that it was really quite fortunate that she was willing to become a saint, because otherwise she would certainly set Paris on fire!"

"Because?" asked the count.

"Because she is beautiful as Sin!"

"Undoubtedly she is quite good-looking," said the count somewhat coldly.

The baroness having gone out on some errands with Clotilde, Monsieur de Moras remained alone with Lucan.

"It really seems to me," he said to the latter, "that our poor Julia is being very harshly treated."

"In what way?"

"Her grandmother speaks of her as of a perverse creature! And what fault do they find with her after all? Her worship for her father's memory! It is excessive, I grant; but filial piety, even when exaggerated, is not a vice, that I know of. Her sentiments are exalted; what does it matter if they are generous? Is that a reason why she should be devoted to the infernal divinities and thrust out of the way to be forgotten?"

"But you are very strange, my friend, I assure you," said Lucan. "What is the matter with you? whom do you mean to blame? You are certainly aware that Julia proposes taking the veil wholly of her own accord; that her mother is distressed about it, and that she has spared no effort to dissuade her from that step. As to myself, I have no reason whatever to be fond of her; she has caused and is still causing me much grief; but you know well enough that I have ever been ready to greet her as my daughter, if she had deigned to return to us"

"Oh! I accuse neither her mother nor yourself, of course; it is the baroness who irritates me; she is unnatural! Julia is her grandchild after all, and she rejoices,—she positively rejoices—at the prospect of seeing her a nun!"

"Ma foi, I declare to you that I am not far from rejoicing too. The situation is too painful for Clotilde;

it must be brought to an end; and as I see no other possible solution—”

“But I beg your pardon; there might be another.”

“And which?”

“She might marry.”

“How likely! and marry—whom pray?”

The count approached nearer to Lucan, looked him straight in the face, and smiling with some embarrassment:

“Me!” he said.

“Repeat that!” said Lucan.

“*Mon cher*,” rejoined the count, “you see that I am as red as a peony; spare me. I have wished for a long time to broach that delicate question to you, but my courage has failed me; since I have found it, at last, don’t deprive me of it.”

“My dear friend,” said Lucan, “allow me to recover a little first, for I am falling from the clouds. What! you are in love with Julia?”

“To an extraordinary degree, my friend.”

“No! there is something under that; you have discovered this means of drawing us together, and you wish to sacrifice yourself for the peace of the family.”

“I swear to you that I am not thinking in the least of the peace of the family; I am thinking wholly of my own, which is very much disturbed, for I love that child with an energy of feeling that I never knew before. If I don’t marry her, I shall never console myself for the rest of my life.”

“To that extent?” said Lucan, dumbfounded.

“It is a terrible thing, *mon cher*,” rejoined Monsieur

de Moras. "I am absolutely in love; when she looks at me, when I touch her hand, when her dress rustles against me, I feel, as it were, a philter running through my veins. I had heard of emotions of that kind, but I had never felt them. I must confess that they delight me; but at the same time they distress me, for I cannot conceal the fact to myself that there are a thousand chances against one that my passion will not be reciprocated, and it really seems as though my heart should wear mourning for it as long as it shall beat."

"What an adventure!" said Lucan, who had recovered all his gravity. "That is a very serious matter; very annoying"

He walked a few steps about the parlor, absorbed in thoughts that seemed of a rather sombre character.

"Is Julia aware of your sentiments?" he said suddenly.

"Most certainly not; I would not have taken the liberty of informing her of them without first speaking to you. Will you be kind enough to act as my ambassador to her mother?"

"Why? yes, with pleasure," said Lucan, with a shade of hesitation that did not escape his friend.

"You think that it is useless, don't you?" said the count with a forced smile.

"Useless, . . . why so?"

"In the first place, it is very late."

"It is somewhat late, no doubt. Things have gone very far; but I have never had much confidence in the stability of Julia's ideas of her vocation. Besides, in these restless imaginations, the sincerest resolutions of to-day become readily the dislikes of the morrow."

"But you doubt that that I should succeed in pleasing her?"

"Why should you not please her? You are more than good-looking. . . . You are thirty-two years old; she is sixteen. . . . You are a little richer than she is. . . . All that does very well."

"Well, then, why do you hesitate to serve me?"

"I do not hesitate to serve you; only I see you very much in love; you are not accustomed to it, and I fear that a condition of things so novel for you might be urging you somewhat hastily to such a grave determination as marriage. A wife is not a mistress. In short, before taking an irrevocable step I would beg of you to think well and further over it."

"My good friend," said the count, "I do not wish, and I believe quite sincerely that I cannot, do so. You know my ideas. Genuine passions always have the best of it, and I am not quite sure that honor itself is a very effective argument against them. As to setting up reason against them, it is worse than folly. Besides, come, Lucan, what is there so unreasonable in the simple fact of marrying a person I love? I don't see that it is absolutely necessary for a man not to love his wife— Well! can I rely upon you?"

"Completely so," said Lucan, taking his hand. "I raised my objections; now I am wholly at your service. I shall speak to Clotilde in a moment. She is going to see her daughter this afternoon. Come and dine with us to-night; but summon up all your courage, for, after all, success is very uncertain."

Monsieur de Lucan found it no difficult task to gain the cause of Monsieur de Moras with Clotilde. After

hearing him, not, however, without interrupting him more than once with exclamations of surprise :

"Mon Dieu !" she replied, "that would be an ideal ! Not only would that marriage put an end to projects that break my heart, but it offers all the conditions of happiness that I can possibly think of for my daughter, and furthermore, the friendship that binds you to Pierre would naturally, some day, bring about a *rapprochement* between his wife and yourself. All that would be too fortunate ; but how could we hope for such a complete and sudden revolution in Julia's ideas ? She will not even allow me to deliver my message to the end."

She left, palpitating with anxiety. She found Julia alone in her room, trying on before a mirror her novice's dress : the guimpe and the veil that were to conceal her luxuriant hair were laid upon the bed ; she was simply dressed in a long white woollen tunic, whose folds she was engaged in adjusting. She blushed when she saw her mother come in ; then with an incipient laugh :

"Cymodocea in the circus, isn't it, mother ?"

Clotilde made no answer ; she had joined her hands in a supplicating attitude, and wept as she looked at her. Julia was moved by that mute sorrow ; two tears rolled from her eyes, and she threw her arms around her mother's neck ; then, taking a seat by her side :

"What can I do ?" she said ; "I, too, feel some regret at heart, for, after all, I was fond of life ; . . . but aside from my vocation, which I believe quite real, I am yielding to a positive necessity. . . . There is no other existence possible for me but that one. I know very well it's my own fault ; I have been somewhat foolish . . . I should not have left you in the first place, or at least I

should have returned to your house immediately after your marriage. . . . Now, after months, and even years, is it possible, I ask you? In the first place, I would die with shame. . . . Can you see me in presence of your husband? What sort of countenance could I put on? And then, he must fairly detest me, . . . the bent must be firmly taken in his mind; . . . myself, who knows if on seeing him again in that house. . . . Finally, I should be in all respects terribly in your way!"

"But, my dear child, no one hates you; you would be received with transports of joy, like the prodigal child. If you deem it too painful to return to my home—if you fear to find or to bring trouble there with you,—God knows how mistaken you are on this point! but still, if you do fear it, is that a reason why you should bury yourself alive and break my heart? Could you not return into the world without returning to my own house, and without having to face all those difficulties that frighten you? There would be a very simple way of doing that, you know!"

"What is it?" said Julia quietly; "to marry?"

"Undoubtedly," said Clotilde, shaking her head gently and lowering her voice.

"But *mon Dieu!* mother, what possible chance is there of such a thing? Suppose I were willing,—and I am far from it,—I know no one, no one knows me. . . ."

"There is some one," rejoined Clotilde, with increasing timidity; "some one whom you know perfectly well, and who . . . who adores you."

Julia opened her eyes wide with a pensive and surprised expression, and after a brief pause of reflection:

"Pierre?" she said.

"Yes," murmured Clotilde, pale with anxiety.

Julia's eyebrows became slightly contracted; she raised her head and remained for a few seconds with her eyes fixed upon the ceiling; then, with a slight shrug of her shoulders:

"Why not?" she said gravely. "I would as soon have him as any one else!"

Clotilde uttered a feeble cry, and grasping both her daughter's hands:

"You consent?" she said; "you really consent? And may I take your answer to him?"

"Yes, but you had better change the text of it," said Julia, laughing.

"Oh! my darling, darling dear!" exclaimed Clotilde, covering Julia's hands with kisses; "but repeat again that it is all true . . . that by to-morrow you will not have changed your mind."

"I will not change my mind," said Julia firmly, in her grave and musical voice.

She meditated for a moment and then resumed:

"Really, he loves me, that big fellow!"

"Like a madman."

"Poor man! . . . And he is waiting for an answer?"

"With the utmost anxiety."

"Well, go and quiet his fears. . . . We will take up the subject again to-morrow. I require to put a little order in my thoughts after all this confusion and excitement, you understand; but you may rest easy. . . . I have decided."

When Madame de Lucan returned home, Pierre de Moras was waiting for her in the parlor. He turned very pale when he saw her.

“Pierre!” she said, all panting still, “come and kiss me, you are my son! . . . Respectfully, if you please, respectfully!” she added laughingly as he lifted her up and clasped her to his heart.

A little later, he had the gratification of treating in the same manner the Baroness de Pers, who had been sent for in all haste.

“My dear friend,” said the baroness, “I am delighted, really delighted, . . . but you are choking me—yes, yes, it is all for the best, my dear fellow—but you are literally choking me, I tell you! Reserve yourself, my friend, reserve yourself!—The dear child! that’s quite nice of her, quite nice! In point of fact, she has a heart of gold! . . . And then she has good taste too, . . . for you are very handsome yourself, very handsome, *mon cher*, very handsome! To be perfectly candid, I always had an idea that, at the moment of cutting off her hair, she would think the matter over. . . . And she has such beautiful hair, the poor child!”

And the baroness melted into tears; then addressing the count in the midst of her sobs:

“You’ll not be very unhappy either, by the way: she is a goddess!”

Monsieur de Lucan, though deeply moved by this family tableau, and above all, by Clotilde’s joy, took more coolly that unexpected event. Besides that he did not generally show himself very demonstrative in public, he was sad and anxious at heart. The future prospects of this marriage seemed extremely uncertain to him, and in his profound friendship for the count he felt alarmed. He had not ventured, through a sentiment of delicate reserve towards Julia, upon telling him all he thought of her char-

acter and disposition. He strove to banish from his mind as partial and unjust the opinion he had formed of her ; but still he could not help remembering the terrible child he had known once, at times wild as a hurricane, at others pensive and wrapped in gloomy reserve ; he tried to imagine her such as she had been described to him since : tall, handsome, ascetic ; then he fancied her suddenly casting her veil to the winds, like one of the fantastic nuns in *Robert le Diable*, and returning swift-footed into the world : of all these various impressions he composed, in spite of himself, a figure of Chimera and Sphinx, which he found very difficult to connect with the idea of domestic happiness.

They discussed in the family circle, during the whole evening, the complications which might arise from that marriage project, and the means of avoiding them. Monsieur de Lucan entered into all these details with the utmost good grace, and declared that he would lend himself heartily, for his own part, to all the arrangements which his daughter-in-law might wish. That precaution was not destined to be useless.

Early the next morning, Clotilde returned to the convent. Julia, after listening with slightly ironical nonchalance to the account which her mother gave her of the transports and the joy of her intended, assumed a more serious air.

"And your husband," she said, "what does he think of it?"

"He is delighted, as we all are."

"I am going to ask you a singular question : does he expect to be present at our wedding?"

"That will be just as you like."

"Listen, good little mother, and don't grieve in advance. I know very well that sooner or later, this marriage must be the means of bringing us all together . . . but let me have a little time to become accustomed to the idea. . . . Grant me a few months so that the old Julia may be forgotten, and I may forget her myself. . . you will; say, won't you?"

"Anything you please," said Clotilde, with a sigh.

"I beg of you. . . . Tell him that I beg of him too."

"I'll tell him; but do you know that Pierre is here?"

"Ah! mon Dieu! and where did you leave him?"

"I left him in the garden."

"In the garden! . . . how imprudent, mother! why, the ladies are going to tear him to pieces . . . like Orpheus, for you may well believe that he is not in the odor of sanctity here."

Monsieur de Moras was sent for at once, and he came up in all haste. Julia began laughing as he appeared at the door, which facilitated his *entrée*. She had several times, during their interview, fits of that nervous laughter which is so useful to women in trying circumstances. Deprived of that resource, Monsieur de Moras contented himself with kissing the beautiful hands of his cousin, and was otherwise generally wanting in eloquence; but his handsome and manly features were resplendent, and his large blue eyes were moist with gratified affection. He appeared to leave a favorable impression.

"I had never considered him in that light," said Julia to her mother; "he is really very handsome . . . he will make a splendid-looking husband."

The marriage took place three months later, privately

and without any display. The Count de Moras and his youthful bride left for Italy the same evening.

Monsieur de Lucan had left Paris two or three weeks before, and had taken up his quarters in an old family residence at the very extremity of Normandy, where Clotilde hastened to join him immediately after Julia's departure.

IV.

VASTVILLE, the patrimonial domain of the Lucan family, is situated a short distance from the sea, on the west coast of the Norman Finisterre. It is a manor with high roof and wrought-iron balconies, which dates from the time of Louis XIII., and which has taken the place of the old castle, a few ruins of which still serve to ornament the park. It is concealed in a thickly shaded depression of the soil, and a long avenue of antique elms precedes it. The aspect of it is singularly retired and melancholy, owing to the dense woods that surround it on all sides. This wooded thicket marks, on this point of the peninsula, the last effort of the vigorous vegetation of Normandy. As soon as its edge has been crossed, the view extends suddenly and without obstacle over the vast moors which form the triangular plateau of the Cape La Hague: fields of furze and heather, stone fences without cement, here and there a cross of granite, on the right and on the left the distant undulations of the ocean,—such is the severe but grand landscape that is suddenly unfolded to the eyes beneath the unobstructed light of the heavens.

Monsieur de Lucan was born in Vastville. The poetic reminiscences of childhood mingled in his imagination with the natural poetry of that site, and made it dear to him. Under pretext of hunting, he came on a pilgrimage to it every year. Since his marriage only, he had given up that habit of the heart, in order not to leave Clotilde, who was detained in Paris by her daughter; but it had been agreed upon that they would go and bury themselves in that retreat for a season as soon as they had recovered their liberty. Clotilde only knew Vastville from her husband's enthusiastic descriptions; she loved it on his representations, and it was for her, in advance, an enchanted spot. Nevertheless, when the carriage that brought her from the station entered, at nightfall, among the wooded hills, in the gloomy avenue that led up to the chateau, she felt an impression as of cold.

"Mon Dieu! my dear," she said laughingly, "your chateau is a perfect castle of Udolpho!"

Lucan excused his chateau as best he could, and protested, moreover, that he was ready to leave it the very next day, if she were not better pleased with its appearance after sunrise.

It was not long before she became passionately fond of it. Her happiness, hitherto so constrained, blossomed freely for the first time in that solitude, and shed upon it a charming light. She even expressed the wish of spending the winter and waiting there for Julia, who was to return to France in the course of the following year. Lucan offered some slight opposition to that project, which appeared to him rather over-heroic for a Parisian, but ended by adopting it, too happy himself to harbor the romance

of his love in that romantic spot. He began, however, taxing his ingenuity to attenuate what there might be too austere in that abode, by opening relations with some of the neighbors for Clotilde's benefit, and by procuring her, at intervals, her mother's society. Madame de Pers was kind enough to lend herself to that combination, although the country was generally repulsive to her, and Vastville in particular had in her eyes a sinister character. She pretended that she heard at night noises in the walls and moans in the woods. She slept with one eye open and two candles burning. The magnificent cliffs that bordered the coast a short distance off, and which they tried to make her admire, caused her a painful sensation.

"Very fine!" she said, "very wild! quite wild! But it makes me sick; I feel as though I were on top of the towers of Notre Dame! Besides, my children, love beautifies everything, and I understand your transports perfectly. As to myself, you must excuse me if do not share them. I can never go into ecstasies over such a country as this.—I am as fond of the country as any one, but this is not the country—it is the desert, Arabia Petreæ, I know not what. . . . And as to your chateau, my dear friend—I am sorry to tell you so: it has a flavor of crime. Look well, and you'll see that a murder has been committed in it."

"Why, no, my dear madame," replied Lucan laughingly, "I know perfectly the history of my family, and I can guarantee you . . ."

"Rest assured, my friend, that some one has been killed in it. . . in old times. You know how little they troubled themselves about those things formerly!"

Julia's letters to her mother were frequent. It was a

regular journal of travels, written helter-skelter, with a striking originality of style, in which the vivacity of the impressions was corrected by that shade of haughty irony which was a peculiarity of the writer. Julia spoke rather briefly of her husband, but always in pleasant terms. There was generally a rapid and kindly postscript addressed to Monsieur de Lucan.

Monsieur de Moras was more chary of descriptions. He seemed to see no one but his wife in Italy. He extolled her beauty, still further enhanced, he said, by the contact of all those marvels of art with which she was becoming impregnated; he praised her extraordinary taste, her intelligence, and even her good disposition. In this latter respect, she was extremely matured, and he found her almost too staid and too grave for her age. These particulars delighted Clotilde, and finished instilling into her heart a peace she had never yet enjoyed.

The count's letters were not less reassuring for the future than the present. He did not think it necessary, he said, to urge Julia on the subject of her reconciliation with her step-father; but he felt that she was quite ready for it. He was, besides, preparing her more and more for it by conversing habitually with her of the old friendship that united him to Monsieur de Lucan, of their past life, of their travels, of the perils they had braved together. Not only did Julia hear these narratives without revolt, but she often solicited them, as if she had regretted her prejudices, and had sought good reasons to forget them.

"Come, Pylades, speak to me of Orestes!" she would say.

After having spent the whole winter season and part

of the spring in Italy, Monsieur and Madame de Moras visited Switzerland, announcing their intention of sojourning there until the middle of summer. The thought occurred to Monsieur and Madame de Lucan to go and join them there, and thus abruptly bring about a reconciliation that seemed henceforth to be but a mere matter of form. Clotilde was preparing to submit that project to her daughter when she received, one beautiful May morning, the following letter dated from Paris:

“BELOVED MOTHER,—

“‘No more Switzerland!’ too much Switzerland! Here I am; don’t disturb yourself. I know how much you are enjoying yourself at Vastville. We’ll go and join you there one of these fine mornings, and we’ll all come home together in the autumn. I only ask you a few days to look after our future establishment here.

“We are at the *Grand Hotel*. I did not choose to stop at your house, for all sorts of reasons, nor at my grandmother’s, who, however, insisted very kindly upon our doing so:

“‘Oh! mon Dieu! my dear children that must not be in a hotel! why, that is not proper. You cannot remain in a hotel! Come and stay with me. Mon Dieu! you’ll be very uncomfortable. . . . You’ll be camping out, as it were. . . I don’t even know how I’ll manage to give you anything to eat, for my cook is sick abed, and that stupid coachman of mine, by the way, has a sty on his eye! But why not let people know you were coming? You fall upon me like two flower-pots from a window! It’s incredible!—You are in good health, my friend. . . . I need not

ask you. . . . It shows plainly enough. . . . And you, my beautiful pet? Why! it is the sun; . . . the sun itself. . . . Hide yourself . . . you are dazzling my eyes!—Have you any luggage? Well, we'll just put it in the parlor; it can't be helped. And as to yourselves, I'll give you my own room. I'll engage a housekeeper and hire a driver from some livery stable. . . . You'll not be in my way at all, not at all, not at all!'

“In short, we did not accept.

“But the explanation of this sudden return! . . . Here it is:

“‘Are you not tired of Switzerland, my dear?’ I asked of my husband.

“‘I am tired of Switzerland,’ replied that faithful echo.

“‘Suppose we go away, then?’

“And away we went.

“Glad and moved to the bottom of my soul at the thought of soon kissing you,

“JULIA.

“P.S.—I beg Monsieur de Lucan not to intimidate me.”

The days that followed were delightfully busy for Clotilde. She herself unpacked the parcels that constantly kept coming, and put the contents away with her own maternal hands. She unfolded and folded again, she caressed those skirts, those waists of fine and perfumed linen, which were already to her like a part of her daughter's person. Lucan, a little jealous, surprised her meditating lovingly over those pretty things. She went to the stables to see Julia's horse, which had followed soon after the boxes; she gave him lumps of sugar and chatted

with him. She filled with flowers and verdant foliage the apartments set apart for the young couple.

This fever of happiness soon came to its happy termination. About a week after her arrival in Paris, Julia wrote to her mother that they expected, her husband and herself, to leave that evening, and that they would be in Cherbourg the next morning. That was the nearest station to Vastville. Clotilde prepared, of course, to go and meet them with her carriage. Monsieur de Lucan, after duly conferring with her on the subject, thought best not to accompany her. He feared that he might interfere with the first emotions of the return, and yet, not wishing that Julia should attribute his absence to a lack of attention, he resolved to go and meet the travellers on horseback.

V.

It was on one of the first days of June. Clotilde had left early in the morning, fresh and radiant as the dawn. Two hours later, Lucan mounted his horse and started at a walk. The roads are lovely in Normandy at this season. The hawthorn hedges perfume the country, and sprinkle here and there the edges of the road with their rosy snow. A profusion of fresh verdure, dotted with wild flowers, covers the face of the ditches. All that, under the gay morning sun, is a feast for the eyes. M. de Lucan, however, greatly contrary to his custom,

bestowed but very slight attention upon the spectacle of that smiling nature. He was preoccupied, to a degree that surprised himself, with his coming meeting with his step-daughter. Julia had been such a besetting thought in his mind that he had retained of her an exaggerated impression. He strove in vain to restore her to her natural proportions, which were, after all, only those of a child, formerly a naughty child, now a prodigal child. He had become accustomed to invest her, in his imagination, with a mysterious importance and a sort of fatal power, of which he found it difficult to strip her. He laughed and felt irritated at his own weakness; but he experienced an agitation mingled with curiosity and vague uneasiness, at the moment of beholding face to face that sphinx whose shadow had so long disturbed his life, and who now came in person to sit at his fireside.

An open barouche, decked with parasols, appeared at the summit of a hill; Lucan saw a head leaning and a handkerchief waving outside the carriage: he urged at once his horse to a gallop. Almost at the same instant the carriage stopped, and a young woman jumped lightly upon the road; she turned around to address a few words to her travelling-companions, and advanced alone towards Lucan. Not wishing to be outdone in politeness, he alighted also, handed his horse to the groom who followed him, and started with cheerful alacrity in the direction of the young woman, whom he did not recognize, but who was evidently Julia. She was coming towards him without haste, with a sliding walk, rocking gently her flexible figure. As she drew near, she threw off her veil with a rapid motion of her

hand, and Lucan was enabled to find again upon that youthful face, in those large and slightly clouded eyes, and the pure and stretching arch of the eyebrows, some features of the child he had known.

When Julia's glance met that of Lucan, her pale complexion became suffused with a purple blush. He bowed very low to her, and with a smile full of affectionate grace :

"Welcome !" he said.

"Thank you, sir," said Julia in a voice whose grave and melodious suavity struck Lucan ; "friends, are we not ?" And she held out both her hands to him with charming resolution.

He drew her gently to himself to kiss her ; but thinking that he felt a slight resistance in the suddenly stiffening arms of his step-daughter, he contented himself with kissing her wrist just above her glove. Then affecting to look at her with a polite admiration, which, however, was perfectly sincere :

"I really feel," he said laughingly, "like asking you to whom I have the honor of speaking."

"You find me grown ?" she said, showing her dazzling teeth.

"Surprisingly so," said Lucan ; "most surprisingly. I understand Pierre perfectly now."

"Poor Pierre !" said Julia ; "he is so fond of you. Don't let us keep him waiting any longer, if you please."

They started in the direction of the carriage, in front of which Monsieur de Moras was awaiting them, and while walking side by side :

"What a lovely country !" resumed Julia. . . . "And the sea quite near ?"

"Quite near."

"We'll take a ride on horseback after breakfast, will we not?"

"Quite willingly; but you must be horribly fatigued, my dear child. . . . Excuse me! . . . my dear. . . . By the way, how do you wish me to call you?"

"Call me madame. . . . I was such a bad child!"

And she broke forth into a roll of that sudden, graceful, but somewhat equivocal laughter that was habitual with her. Then raising her voice:

"You may come, Pierre; your friend is my friend now!"

She left the two men shaking hands cordially, and, exchanging the usual greetings, jumped into the carriage, and resuming her seat at her mother's side:

"Mother," she said, kissing her at the same time, "the meeting came off very well—didn't it, Monsieur de Lucan?"

"Very well indeed," said Lucan laughingly, "except some minor details."

"Oh! you are too hard to please, sir!" said Julia, drawing her wrappings around her.

The next moment Monsieur de Lucan was cantering by the carriage door, while the three travellers inside were indulging in one of those expansive talks that usually follow the happy solution of a dreaded crisis. Clotilde, henceforth in the full possession of all her affections, was fairly soaring in the ethereal blue.

"You are too handsome, mother," said Julia. "With such a big girl as I am, it is a positive crime!"

And she kissed her again.

Lucan, while participating in the conversation and

doing to Julia the honors of the landscape, was trying to sum up within himself his impressions of the ceremony which had just taken place. Upon the whole he thought, as did his step-daughter, that it had come off very well, although it was not quite perfection. Perfection would have been to find in Julia a plain and unaffected woman, who would have simply thrown herself in her step-father's arms and laughed with him at her spoilt child's escapade; but he had never expected Julia's manners to be quite as frank and open as that. She had done in the present circumstances all that could be expected of a nature like hers: she had shown herself graciously friendly; she had, it is true, imparted to this first interview a certain solemn and dramatic turn. She was romantic, and as Lucan was tolerably so himself, this whim of hers had not proved unpleasant to him.

He had been, moreover, agreeably surprised at the beauty of Madame de Moras, which was indeed striking. The severe regularity of her features, the deep lustre of her blue eyes fringed with long black lashes, the exquisite harmony of her form were not her only, nor indeed her principal attractions; she owed her rare and personal charm to a sort of strange grace mingled with flexibility and strength, that lent enchantment to her every motion. She had in the play of her countenance, in her step, in her gestures, the sovereign ease of a woman who does not feel a single weak point in her beauty, and who moves, grows, and blossoms with all the freedom of a child in his cradle or a fallow deer in the forest. Made as she was, she had no difficulty in dressing well; the simplest costumes fitted her person with an elegant precision that

caused the Baroness de Pers to say in her inaccurate though expressive language :

“ A pair of kid gloves would be enough to dress her with.”

During that same day and those that followed, Julia conquered new titles to Monsieur de Lucan's good graces, by manifesting a strong liking for the château of Vastville and the surrounding sites. The château pleased her for its romantic style, its old-fashioned garden ornamented with yews and evergreens, the lonely avenues of the park, and its melancholy woods scattered with ruins. She went into ecstasies at the sight of the vast heather plains lashed by the ocean winds, the trees with twisted and convulsive tops, the tall granite cliffs worn by the everlasting waves.

“ All that,” she said laughingly, “ has a great deal of character ;” and as she had a great deal of it herself, she felt in her element. She had found the home of her dreams, she was happy.

Her mother, to whom she paid up in passionate effusions all arrearages of tenderness, was still more so.

The greater part of the day was spent riding about on horseback. After dinner, Julia, with that joyous and somewhat feverish spirit that animated her, related her travels, parodying in a good-natured manner her own enthusiasm and her husband's relative indifference in presence of the masterpieces of antique art. She illustrated these recollections with scenes of mimicry in which she displayed the skill of a fairy, the imagination of an artist, and sometimes the broad humor of a low comedian. In a turn of the hand, with a flower, a bit of silk, a sheet of paper, she composed a Neapolitan, Roman, or Sicilian head-dress. She performed scenes from ballets or operas,

pushing back the train of her dress with a tragic sweep of her foot, and accentuating strongly the common-place exclamations of Italian lyrism :

“O Ciel ! Crudel ! Perfido ! O dio ! Perdona !”

Or else, kneeling on an arm-chair, she imitated the voice and manner of a preacher she had heard in Rome, and who did not seem to have sufficiently edified her.

Through all these various performances she never lost a particle of her grace, and her most comical attitudes retained a certain elegance.

After all these frolics she would resume her expression of an *ennuyed* queen.

Beneath the charm of the life and prestige of this brilliant nature, Monsieur de Lucan readily forgave Julia the caprices and peculiarities of which she was lavishly prodigal, especially towards her step-father. She showed herself generally with him what she had been at the start ; friendly and polite, with a shade of haughty irony ; but she had strong inequalities of temper. Lucan surprised sometimes her gaze riveted upon him with a painful and almost fierce expression. One day she repelled with sullen rudeness the hand he offered to assist her in alighting from her horse or in climbing over a fence. She seemed to avoid every occasion of finding herself alone with him, and when she could not escape a tête-à-tête of a few moments, she manifested either restless irritation or mocking impertinence. Lucan fancied she reproached herself sometimes with belying too much her former sentiments, and that she thought she owed it to herself to give them from time to time a token of fidelity. He was grateful to her, however, for reserving for himself alone

these equivocal manifestations, and for not troubling her mother with them. Upon the whole he attached but a slight importance to these symptoms. If there still was in the affectionate manifestations of his step-daughter something of a struggle and an effort, it was on the part of that haughty nature an excusable feature, a last resistance, which he flattered himself soon to remove by multiplying his delicate attentions towards her.

Some two weeks after Julia's arrival, there was a ball given by the Marchioness de Boisfresnay, in her château of Boisfresnay, which is situated two or three miles from Vastville. Monsieur and Madame de Lucan were on pleasant visiting-terms with the marchioness. They went to that ball with Julia and her husband, the gentlemen in the coupé, the ladies, on account of their dresses, occupying the carriage alone. Towards midnight, Clotilde took her husband aside, and pointing to her daughter, who was waltzing in the adjoining parlor with a naval officer:

"Hush! my dear," she said; "I have a frightful headache, and Pierre is fairly bored to death; but we have not the courage to take Julia away so early. Do you wish to make yourself very agreeable? You'll bring her home, and we will start now, Pierre and myself; we'll leave you the carriage."

"Very well, dear," said Lucan, "run off, then."

Clotilde and Monsieur de Moras slipped away at once.

A moment later Julia, cleaving her way scornfully through the throng that parted before her as before an angel of light, raised her superb brow and made a sign to Lucan.

"I don't see mother," she said.

Lucan informed her in two words of the arrangement

which had just been settled upon. A sudden flash darted across Julia's eyes; her brows became contracted; she shrugged her shoulders slightly without replying, and returned into the ball-room, waltzing through the crowd with the same tranquil insolence. She betook herself again to the arm of a naval officer, and seemed to enjoy whirling in all her splendor. And indeed her ball-dress added a strange lustre to her beauty. Her shoulders and throat, emerging from her dress with a sort of chaste indifference, retained even in the animation of the dance the cold and lustrous purity of marble.

Lucan asked her to waltz with him; she hesitated, but having consulted her memory, she discovered that she had not yet exhausted the list of naval officers who had swooped down in squadrons upon that rich prey. At the end of an hour she got tired of being admired, and called for the carriage. As she was draping herself in her wrappings in the vestibule, her step-father volunteered his services.

"No! I beg of you," she said impatiently; "men don't know—don't know at all!"

Then she threw herself in the carriage with a wearied look. However, as the horses were starting:

"Smoke, sir," she said with a better grace.

Lucan thanked her for the permission, but without availing himself of it; then, while making all his little arrangements of neighborly comfort:

"You were remarkably handsome to-night, my dear child!" he said.

"Monsieur," said Julia in a nonchalant but affirmative tune, "I forbid you to think me handsome, and I forbid you to call me 'my dear child'!"

"As you please," said Lucan. "Well, then, you are not handsome, you are not dear to me, and you are not a child."

"As for being a child, no!" she said energetically.

She wound her veil around her head, crossed her arms over her bosom, and settled herself in her corner, where a stray moonbeam came occasionally to play over her whiteness.

"May I sleep?" she asked.

"Why, most certainly! Shall I close the window?"

"If you please. My flowers will not incommode you?"

"Not in the least."

After a pause:

"Monsieur de Lucan?" resumed Julia.

"Dear madame?"

"Do explain to me in what consist the usages of society; for there are things which I do not understand. . . . Is it admissible—is it proper to allow a woman of my age and a gentleman of yours to return from a ball, tête-à-tête, at two o'clock in the morning?"

"But," said Lucan, not without a certain gravity, "I am not a gentleman; I am your mother's husband."

"Ah! that is true; of course, you are my mother's husband!" she said, emphasizing these words in a ringing voice, which caused Lucan to fear some explosion.

But, appearing to overcome a violent emotion, she went on in an almost cheerful tone:

"Yes, you are my mother's husband; and what is more, you are, according to my notion, a very bad husband for my mother."

"According to your notion!" said Lucan quietly. "And why so?"

"Because you are not at all suited to her."

"Have you consulted your mother on that subject, my dear madame? It seems to me that she must be a better judge of it than yourself."

"I need not consult her. It is enough to see you both together. My mother is an angelic creature, whereas you;—no!"

"What am I, then?"

"A romantic, restless man—the very reverse, in fact. Sooner or later, you'll betray her."

"Never!" said Lucan somewhat sternly.

"Are you quite sure of that, sir?" said Julia, riveting her gaze upon him from the depths of her hood.

"Dear madame," replied Monsieur de Lucan, "you were asking me, a moment since, to explain to you what was proper and what was improper; well, it is improper that we should take, you your mother, and I my wife, as the text for a jest of that kind, and consequently, it is proper that we should drop the subject."

She hushed, remained motionless and closed her eyes. In the course of a minute or too, Lucan saw a tear fall down her long eyelashes and roll over her cheek.

"Mon Dieu! my child," he said, "I have wounded your feelings! Allow me to tender you my sincere apologies."

"Keep your apologies to yourself!" she said in a hoarse voice, opening her eyes wide at the same time. "I have no need of your apologies any more than of your lessons! . . . Your lessons! What have I done to deserve such a humiliation? I cannot understand. What is there

more innocent than my words, and what do you expect me to tell you? Is it my fault if I am here alone with you? . . . if I am compelled to speak to you?—if I know not what to say? Why am I exposed to such things? Why ask me more than I can do? It is presuming too much on my strength! It is enough—it is a thousand times too much already—to be compelled to act such a comedy as I am compelled to act every day. God knows if I am tired of it!”

Lucan found it difficult to overcome the painful surprise that had seized him.

“Julia,” he said at last, “you were kind enough to tell me that we were friends; I believed you. . . . Is it not true, then?”

“No!”

After launching that word with sombre energy, she wrapped up her head and face in her hood and veil, and remained during the rest of the way plunged into a silence which Monsieur de Lucan did not attempt to disturb.

VI.

AFTER a few hours of painful sleep, Monsieur de Lucan rose the next day, his brain laden with cares. The resumption of hostilities, which had been clearly signified to him foreboded surely fresh troubles for his peace and fresh anguish for Clotilde's happiness. Was he, then, about returning to those odious agitations which had so long

harassed his existence, and this time without any hopes of escape? How, indeed, was it possible not to despair of that untamable nature which age and reason, which so much attention and affection had left unmoved in her prejudices and her hatred. How was it possible to undertake, and, above all, ever to overcome the quixotic sentiment, or rather the mania which had taken possession of that concentrated soul, and which was smouldering in it, ever ready to break forth in furious outbursts?

Clotilde and Julia had not yet made their appearance. Lucan went to take a walk in the garden, to breathe once more the peace of his beloved solitude, pending the anticipated storms. At the extremity of an alley of evergreens, he discovered the Count de Moras, his arm resting on the pedestal of an old statue, and his eyes fixed on the ground.

Monsieur de Moras had never been a dreamer, but since his arrival at the château, he had, on more than one occasion, manifested to Lucan a melancholy state of mind quite foreign to his natural disposition. Lucan had felt alarmed; nevertheless, as he did not himself like any one to intrude upon his confidence, he had abstained from questioning him.

They shook hands as they met.

“You came home late last night?” inquired the count.

“At about three o’clock.”

“Oh! *povero!*—*Apropos*, thanks for your kindness to Julia. How did she behave to you?”

“Why . . . well enough,” said Lucan—“a little peculiar, as usual.”

“Oh! peculiar—of course!”

He smiled rather sadly, took Monsieur de Lucan's arm, and leading him through the meandering paths of the garden :

"*Voyons, mon cher,*" he said in a suppressed voice, "between you and me, what is Julia?"

"How, my friend?"

"Yes, what sort of a woman is my wife? If you know, do tell me, I beg of you."

"Excuse me. . . but it is the very question I would like to ask of you myself."

"Of me?" said the count. "But I have not the slightest idea. She is a Sphinx, a riddle, the solution of which escapes me completely. She both charms and frightens me. She is peculiar, you said? She is more than that: she is fantastic. She is not of this world. I know not whom or what I have married. . . . You remember that cold and beautiful creature in the Arabian tales who rose at night to go and feast in the graveyard. It's absurd, but she reminds me of that."

The count's troubled look, the constrained laugh with which he accompanied his words, moved Lucan deeply.

"So then," said the latter, "you are unhappy?"

"It is impossible to be more so," replied the count, pressing his hand hard. "I adore her, and I am jealous without knowing of whom and of what! She does not love me, and yet she loves some one . . . she must love some one! How can I doubt it? Look at her: she is the very embodiment of passion; the fire of passion overflows in her words, in her looks, in the blood of her veins! . . . And near me, she is as cold as the statue upon a tomb!"

"Frankly, *mon cher,*" said Lucan, "you seem to exag-

gerate your disasters greatly. In reality they seem to amount to very little. In the first place, you are seriously in love for the first time in your life, I think; you had heard a great deal said about love, about passion, and perhaps you were expecting of them excessive wonders. In the second place, I must beg you to observe that very young women are rarely very passionate. The sort of coolness of which you complain is therefore quite easy to explain without the intervention of anything supernatural. Young women, I repeat, are generally idealists; their love has no substance. . . . You ask of whom or of what you should be jealous? Be jealous, then, of all those vague and romantic aspirations that torment youthful imaginations; be jealous of the wind, of the tempest, of the barren moors, of the rugged cliffs, of my old manor, of my words and of my ruins—for Julia adores all that. Be, jealous, above all, of that ardent worship she has vowed to her father's memory, and which still absorbs her—I have lately had a proof of the fact—the keenest of her passion."

"You do me good," rejoined Pierre de Moras, breathing more freely, "and yet I had already thought of all these things. . . . But if she does not love now, she will some day . . . and suppose it should not be me! Were she to bestow upon another all that she refuses me! . . . my friend," added the count, whose handsome features turned pale, "I would kill her with my own hand!"

"So much for being in love," said Lucan; "and I, am I nothing more to you, then?"

"You, my friend?" said Moras with emotion "you see my confidence in you! I have revealed to you weaknesses of which I am ashamed. . . . Ah! why have

I ever known any other feeling than that of friendship! Friendship alone returns as much as it receives; it fortifies instead of enervating; it is the only passion worthy of a man. . . . Never forsake me, my friend; you will console me, whatever may happen."

The bell that was ringing for breakfast called them back to the chateau. Julia pretended being tired and ailing. Under shelter of this pretext, her silent humor, her more than dry answers to Lucan's polite questions, passed at first without awakening either her mother's or her husband's attention; but during the remainder of the day, and amid the various incidents of family life, Julia's aggressive tone and disagreeable manners towards Lucan became too strongly marked not to be noticed. However, as Lucan had the patience and good taste not to seem to notice it, each one kept his own impressions to himself. The dinner was, that day, more quiet than usual. The conversation fell, towards the end of the meal, upon extremely delicate ground, and it was Julia who brought it there, though, however, without the least thought of evil. She was exhausting her mocking *verve* upon a little boy of eight or ten—the son of the Marchioness de Boisfresnay—who had annoyed her extremely the night before, by parading through the ball his own pretentious little person, and by throwing himself pleasantly like a top between the legs of the gentlemen and through the dresses of the ladies. The marchioness went into ecstasies at these charming pranks. Clotilde defended her mildly, alleging that this child was her only son.

"That is no reason for bestowing upon society one scoundrel the more," said Lucan.

"However," rejoined Julia, who hastened to be no longer of her own opinion as soon as her step-father seemed to have rallied to it, "it is a well acknowledged fact that spoilt children are those who turn out the best."

"There are at least some exceptions," said Lucan coldly.

"I know of none," said Julia.

"Mon Dieu!" said the Count de Moras in a tone of conciliation, "right or wrong, it is quite the fashion, nowadays, to spoil children."

"It is a criminal fashion," said Lucan. "Formerly their parents whipped them, and thus made men of them."

"When a man has such a disposition as that," said Julia, "he does not deserve to have any children and he has none!" she added with a direct look that further aggravated the unkind and even cruel intention of her words.

Monsieur de Lucan turned very pale. Clotilde's eyes filled with tears. Julia, embarrassed at her triumph, left the room. Her mother, after remaining for a few moments her face covered with her hands, rose from the table and went to join her.

"Now, *mon cher*," said Monsieur de Moras as soon as he found himself alone with Lucan, "what the mischief took place between you two last night? . . . You did tell me something about it this morning, but I was so much absorbed in my own selfish preoccupations, that I paid no attention to it. . . . But tell me, what did take place between you?"

"Nothing serious. Only I was able to satisfy myself

that she had not yet forgiven my occupying a place which, according to her ideas, should never have been filled."

"What would you advise me to do, George?" rejoined Monsieur de Moras. "I am ready to do whatever you say."

"My dear friend," said Lucan, laying gently his hands upon Pierre's shoulders, "don't be offended, but life in common, under such conditions, becomes a very difficult matter. It is best not to wait until some irreparable scene. In Paris we will be able to see each without difficulty. I advise you to take her away."

"Suppose she is not willing."

"I should speak firmly," said Lucan, looking him straight in the eyes; "I have some work to do this evening: it happens well and will give you a good opportunity. In the meantime, *au revoir*."

Monsieur de Lucan locked himself up in his library. An hour later, Clotilde came to join him. He could see that she had wept a great deal; but she held out her forehead to him with her sweetest smile. While he was kissing her, she murmured simply and in a whisper:

"Forgive her for my sake!"

And the charming creature withdrew in haste to hide her emotions.

The next morning, Monsieur de Lucan, who, as usual, had risen quite early, had been writing for some time near the library window, which opened at quite a moderate height on the garden. He was not a little surprised to see his step-daughter's face appear among the honeysuckle vines that crept over the iron trellis of the balcony:

"Monsieur," she said in her most melodious tone, "are you very busy?"

"Oh, not at all!" he replied, rising at the same time.

"It's because, you see, the weather is perfectly delightful," she said. "Will you come and take a walk with me?"

"Of course I will."

"Well, come then. . . . Good Heavens! how sweet this honeysuckle does smell!"

And she snatched off a few flowers, which she threw to Lucan through the window, with a burst of laughter. He fastened them to his button-hole, making the gesture of a man who understands nothing of what is going on, but who has no reason to be angry.

He found her in fresh morning costume, stamping upon the sand with her light and impatient foot.

"Monsieur de Lucan," she told him gayly, "my mother wishes me to be amiable with you, my husband wishes it, Heaven wills it too, I suppose; that's why I am willing also, and I assure you that I can be very amiable when I try. . . . You'll see!"

"Is it possible?" said Lucan.

"You'll see, sir!" she replied, dropping, him with all possible grace, a regular stage curtsy.

"And where are we going, pray, madame?"

"Wherever you like . . . through the woods, at random, if you please."

The wooded hills came so close to the chateau, that they bordered with a fringe of shade one side of the yard. Monsieur de Lucan and Julia took the first path that came in their way; but it was not long before Julia left the beaten roadway, to walk at hazard from tree to tree, wandering at random, beating the thickets with her cane, picking flowers or leaves, stopping in ecstasy before the

luminous bands that striped here and there the mossy carpets, frankly intoxicated with movement, open air, sunshine, and youth. While walking, she cast to her companion words of pleasant fellowship, playful interpellation, childish jests, and caused the woods to ring again with the melody of her laughter.

In her admiration for the wild flora, she had gradually collected a regular bundle, of which Monsieur de Lucan accepted the burden with cheerful resignation. Noticing that he was almost bending under the weight, she sat down upon the gnarled roots of an old oak, in order, she said to make a selection among all this pell-mell. She then took upon her lap the bundles of grass and flowers, and began throwing out everything that appeared to her of inferior quality. She handed over to Lucan, seated a step or two from her, whatever she thought fit to retain for the final bouquet, justifying gravely her decision upon each plant that she examined :

“ You, my dear, you are too thin ! you’re pretty, but too short ! . . . you, you smell bad ! . . . you, you look stupid.”

Then, turning abruptly into another train of thought, which was not at first without causing some uneasiness to Monsieur de Lucan :

“ It was you, wasn’t it, who advised Pierre to speak to me with firmness ? ”

“ I ? ” said Lucan, “ what an idea ! ”

“ It must have been you.—You,” she went on again, speaking to her flowers, “ you look sickly, good-night ! —Yes, it must have been you. . . . One might think you quite meek, to look at you, whereas, on the contrary, you are very harsh, very tyrannical.”

“ Ferocious ! ” said Lucan.

"At any rate, I have no fault to find with you for that. You were right : poor Pierre is too weak with me. I like a man to be a man. . . And yet he is very brave, is he not?"

"Extremely so," said Lucan ; "he is capable of the most energetic actions."

"He looks like it, and yet with me . . . he is an angel."

"It is because he loves you."

"Quite probable !—Some of those flowers are so curious. . . . Look at this one : it looks like a little lady!"

"I hope that you love him too, my good Pierre?"

"Quite probable too!"

After a pause, she shook her head :

"And why should I love him?"

"What a question !" said Lucan. "Why, because he is perfectly worthy of being loved ; because he has every quality : intelligence, heart, and even beauty . . . finally, because you have married him."

"Monsieur de Lucan, will you allow me to tell you something confidentially?"

"I beg you to do so."

"That trip to Italy has been very injurious to me."

"In what way?"

"Before my marriage, I did not think myself positively ugly, but I fancied myself at least quite plain."

"Yes. . . . Well?"

"Well ! while travelling about Italy, among all those souvenirs and those marbles, so much admired, I made strange reflections. I said to myself that, after all, these princesses and goddesses of the ancient world, who drove shepherds and kings mad, for whose sake wars broke out and sacrileges were committed, were persons pretty much after my own style. Then occurred to me the fatal idea

of my own beauty! I felt that I disposed of an exceptional power; that I was a sacred object that could not be given away for a vulgar trifle, and which could only be the reward—how can I say?—of a great deed or of a crime!”

Lucan remained for a moment astonished at the audacious naïveté of that language. He thought best, however, to laugh at it.

“But, my dear Julia,” he said, “take care: you mistake the age. . . . We are no longer in the days when nations went to war for the sake of a woman’s pretty eyes. . . . However, speak about it to Pierre; he has everything required to furnish the great action you want. As to the crime, I think you had better give it up.”

“Do you think so?” said Julia. “What a pity!” she added, bursting out in a hearty laugh. “You see, I tell you all the nonsense that comes in my head. . . . That’s amiable enough, I hope, is it not?”

“It is certainly extremely amiable,” said Lucan. “Keep on.”

“With such precious encouragement, sir!” she said, rising and finishing her sentence with a curtsy; “but for the present, let us go to breakfast. . . . I recommend my bouquet to your attention. Hold the heads down. . . . Walk ahead, sir, and by the shortest road, if you please, for I have an appetite that is bringing tears to my eyes.”

Lucan took the path that led most directly to the chateau. She followed him with nimble step, at times humming a cavatina, at others addressing him fresh instructions as to the manner of holding her bouquet, or touching him lightly with the end of her cane, to make him admire some birds perched upon a branch.

Clotilde and Monsieur de Moras were waiting for them,

seated upon a bench outside the gate of the chateau. The anxiety depicted upon their countenances vanished at the sound of Julia's laughing voice.

As soon as she saw them, she snatched the bouquet from Lucan's hands, ran towards Clotilde, and throwing on her lap her fragrant harvest:

"Mother," she said, "we have had a delightful walk—I had a great deal of fun; Monsieur de Lucan also, . . . and what's more, he has improved very much by my conversation. . . . I opened up new horizons to him!"

She described with her hand a great curve in the air, to indicate the immensity of the horizons she had opened up to Monsieur de Lucan. Then, drawing her mother towards the dining-room, and snuffing the air with apparent relish:

"Oh! that kitchen of my mother's!" she said. "What an aroma!"

This charming humor, which was a source of great rejoicing to all the guests of the chateau, never flagged during that entire day, and, most unexpected of all, it continued during the next and the following days without perceptible change. If Julia did still nurture any remnants of her moody cares, she had at least the kindness of keeping them to herself, and to suffer alone. More than once, still, she was seen returning from her solitary excursions with gloomy eye and clouded brow; but she shook off these equivocal dispositions as soon as she found herself again in the family circle, and was all amiability.

Towards Monsieur de Lucan particularly she showed herself most agreeable; feeling, probably, that she had many amends to make in that direction. She went so

far as to take up a great deal of his time without much discretion, and to call him a little too often in requisition for walks or rides, for tapestry drawings, for playing duets with her, sometimes for nothing, simply to disturb him, standing in front of his windows, and asking him, in the midst of his reading, all sorts of burlesque questions. All this was charming; Monsieur de Lucan lent himself to it with the utmost good-nature, and did not surely deserve great credit for doing so.

About this time, the Baroness de Pers came to spend three days with her daughter. She was at once advised, with full particulars, of the miraculous change that had taken place in Julia's character, and of her behavior towards her step-father. On witnessing the gracious attentions which she lavished upon Monsieur de Lucan, Madame de Pers manifested the liveliest satisfaction, in the midst of which, however, could be seen at times some slight traces of her former prejudices against her grand-daughter.

The day before the expected departure of the baroness, some of the neighbors were invited to dinner for her gratification, for she had but very little taste for the intimacy of family life, and was passionately fond of strangers. For want of time to do any better, they gave her for company, the curé of Vastville, the local physician, the receiver of taxes, and recorder of deeds, all of whom were tolerably frequent guests at the château, and great admirers of Julia. It was doubtless not a great deal; it was enough, however, to furnish to the baroness an occasion for wearing one of her handsome dinner-dresses.

Julia, during the dinner, seemed to make it a point to effect the conquest of the curé, a simple old man, who

yielded to his fair neighbor's fascinations with a sort of joyous stupor. She made him eat, she made him drink, she made him laugh.

"What a little serpent she is, isn't she, Monsieur le Curé?" said the baroness.

"She is very lovely," said the curé.

"Enough to make one shudder," rejoined the baroness.

In the evening, after waltzing for a little while around the room, Julia, accompanied by her husband, sang in her beautiful, grave, voice, some unpublished melodies and national songs she had brought back from Italy. One of these tunes having reminded her of a sort of tarentella she had seen danced by some women at Procida, she requested her husband to play it. She was explaining at the same time, with much animation, how this tarentella was danced, giving a rapid outline of the steps, the gestures and the attitudes; then, suddenly carried away by the ardor of her narrative:

"Wait a moment, Pierre," she said, "I am going to dance it. . . . That will be much more simple."

She lifted the long train of her dress, which impeded her movements, and requested her mother to loop it up with pins. In the meantime she was right busy herself: there were on the mantel-piece, and on the consoles, vases filled with flowers and verdure; she drew freely from them with her nimble fingers, and, standing before a mirror, she fastened and twined pell-mell, in her magnificent hair, flowers, leaves, bunches, ears, anything that happened to fall under her hands. With her head loaded with that heavy and quivering wreath, she came to place herself in the centre of the parlor.

"Go on now, dear!" she said to Monsieur de Moras.

He played the tarentella, that began with a sort of slow and measured ballet-step, which Julia performed in her own masterly style, folding and unfolding in turn, like two garlands, her Peri's arms; then the rhythm becoming more and more animated, she struck the floor with her rapid and repeated steps, with the wild suppleness and the wanton smile of a young bacchante. Suddenly she brought the performance to a close with a long slide that carried her, all panting, before Monsieur de Lucan, seated opposite to her. There, she bent one knee, lay with rapid gesture both her hands upon her hair, and tossing about at the same time her inclined head, she shook off her crown in a shower of flowers at the feet of Lucan, saying in her sweetest voice, and in a tone of gracious homage:

“There! sir!”

After which, she rose, and, still sliding, made her way to an arm-chair, into which she threw herself, and taking up the curé's three-cornered hat, she began to fan herself vigorously with it.

In the midst of the applause and the laughter that filled the parlor, the Baroness de Pers drew gently nearer to Lucan on the sofa which they were jointly occupying, and said to him in a whisper:

“Tell me, my dear sir, what in the world is the meaning of this new system? Do you know that I still preferred the old style myself? . . .”

“How, dear madame? And why so?” said Lucan simply.

But before the baroness had time to explain, admitting that such was her intention, Julia was taken with another fancy.

"Really," she said, "I am smothering here.—Monsieur de Lucan, do offer me your arm."

She went out, and Lucan followed her. She stopped in the vestibule to cover her head with her great white veil, seemed to hesitate between the door that led into the garden and that which led into the yard, and then deciding:

"To the Ladies' Walk," she said; "it's coolest there."

"The Ladies' Walk," which was Julia's favorite strolling resort, opened opposite the avenue, on the other side of the court-yard. It was a gently sloping path contrived between the rocky base of the wooded hills and the banks of a ravine that seemed to have been one of the moats of the old castle. A brook flowed at the bottom of this ravine with a melancholy murmur; it became merged, a little farther off, into a small lake shaded by willows, and guarded by two old marble nymphs, to which the Ladies' Walk was indebted for its name, consecrated by the local tradition. Half-way between the yard and the pond, fragments of wall and broken arches, the evident remnants of some outer fortification, rose against the hill-side; for the space of a few paces, these ruins bordered the path with their heavy buttresses, and projected into it, together with festoons of ivy and briar, a mass of shade which night changed into densest darkness. It looked then as if the passage was broken by an abyss. The gloomy character of this site was not, however, without some mitigating features: the path was strewn with fine, dry sand; rustic benches stood against the bluff; finally, the grassy banks that sloped down into the ravine were dotted with hyacinths, violets, and dwarf roses

whose perfume rose and lingered in that shaded ally like the odor of incense in a church.

It was then about the end of July, and the heat had been overpowering during the day. After leaving the atmosphere of the court-yard, still aglow with the fires of the setting sun, Julia breathed eagerly the cool air of the woods and of the brook.

“Dieu! how delightful this is!” she said.

“But I am afraid this may be a little too delightful,” said Lucan; “allow me”

And he wound up in a double fold around her neck the floating ends of her veil.

“What! do you value my life, then?” she said.

“Most undoubtedly.”

“That’s magnanimous!”

She walked a few steps in silence, resting lightly upon the arm of her companion, and rocking, in her peculiar way, her graceful figure.

“Your good curé must take me for a species of demon,” she added.

“He is not the only one,” said Lucan, with ironical coldness.

She laughed a short and constrained laugh; then, after another pause, and while continuing to walk with down-cast eyes:

“You must certainly hate me a little less now; say, don’t you?”

“A little less.”

“Be serious, will you? I know that I have made you suffer a great deal. Are you beginning to forgive me now?”

Her voice had assumed an accent of tenderness quite unusual to it, and which touched Monsieur de Lucan.

"I forgive you with all my heart, my child," he replied. She stopped, and grasping his two hands:

"True? We will not hate each other any more?" she said, in a low and apparently timid tone. "You love me a little?"

"Thank you," said Lucan, with grave emotion; "thank you; I love you very much."

As she was drawing him gently toward her he clasped her in a frank and affectionate embrace, and pressed his lips upon the forehead she was holding up to him; but at the same instant he felt her supple figure stiffen; her head rolled back; then she sank bodily, and slipped in his arms like a flower whose stem has suddenly been mowed down.

There was a bench within two steps; he carried her there, but after laying her upon it, instead of affording her the required assistance, he remained in an attitude of strange immobility before that lovely and helpless form. A long silence followed, broken only by the gentle and monotonous ripple of the brook. Shaking off his stupor at last, Monsieur de Lucan called out several times in a loud and almost harsh voice:

"Julia! Julia!"

As she remained motionless still, he ran down into the ravine, took some water in the hollow of his hand, and bathed her temples with it. In the course of a minute or two, he saw her eyes opening in the darkness, and he helped her raise her head.

"What is it?" she said, looking at him with a wild expression; "what has happened, sir?"

"Why, you fainted," said Lucan, laughing.

"Fainted?" repeated Julia.

"Of course; that's just what I feared; you must have been benumbed by the cold. Can you walk? Come, try."

"Perfectly well," she said, rising and taking his arm.

Like all those who experience sudden prostration, Julia remembered, but in a very indistinct manner, the circumstance that had brought about her fainting.

In the meantime they had resumed their walk slowly in the direction of the château.

"Fainted!" she repeated gayly; "mon Dieu! how perfectly ridiculous!"

Then, with sudden animation:

"But what did I say? Did I speak at all?"

"You said, 'I am cold!' and away you went!"

"Just like that?"

"Just like that."

"Did you think I was dead?"

"I did hope for a moment that you were," said Lucan coldly.

"How horrid of you! . . . But we were talking before that. What were we saying?"

"We were making a pact of amity and friendship."

"Well! it doesn't look much like it now, Monsieur de Lucan!"

"Madame?"

"You seem positively angry with me because I fainted."

"Of course I am. . . . In the first place, I don't like that sort of adventures, . . and then, it is wholly your own fault: . . . you are so imprudent, so unreasonable!"

"Oh! mon Dieu! . . . Don't you want a switch?"

And as the lights of the château were coming into sight:

"*Apropos*, don't trouble mother with any of that nonsense, will you?"

"Certainly not; you may rest easy on that score."

"You are just as cross as you can be, you know?"

"Probably I am; but I have just spent there a few minutes so very painful. . . ."

"I pity you with all my heart," said Julia dryly.

She threw off her veil in the vestibule, and returned to the parlor.

The Baroness de Pers, who was to leave early the next day, had already retired. Julia performed some four-handed pieces on the piano with her mother. Monsieur de Lucan took the place of the "dummy" at the whist table, and the evening ended quietly.

VII.

THE next morning, Clotilde was preparing to accompany her mother to the station in the carriage; Monsieur de Lucan, detained at the château by a business appointment, was present to take leave of his mother-in-law. He remarked the thoughtful countenance of the baroness; she was silent, much against her habit, and she cast embarrassed looks upon him; she approached him several times with a constrained smile and confidential manner, but confined herself to addressing him a few commonplace words. Availing herself at last of a moment when Clotilde was giving some orders, she leaned out of the carriage-window, and, pressing significantly Monsieur de Lucan's hand:

"Be true and faithful to her, sir!" she said.

The carriage started almost immediately, but not before

he had had time to notice that her eyes were filled with tears.

The matter that was engrossing Monsieur de Lucan's attention at the time, and on the subject of which he had had a long conversation that very morning with his lawyer and his advocate, who had come over from Caen during the night, was an old family law-suit which the mayor of Vastville, an ambitious personage and restless busy-body, had taken pride in bringing to light again. The question at issue was a claim for some public property the effect of which would have been to strip Monsieur de Lucan of a portion of his timbered lands and to curtail materially his patrimonial estate. He had gained his suit in the lower court, but an appeal was soon to be heard, and he was not without fears as to the final result. He had no difficulty in using that pretext, to account during the next few days, to the eyes of the inhabitants of the château, for a severity of physiognomy, a briefness of language, and a fondness for solitude, which concealed perhaps graver cares. That pretext, however, soon failed him. A telegram informed him, early the following week, that the suit had been finally decided in his favor, and he was compelled to manifest on this occasion an apparent joy that was far indeed from his heart.

He resumed from that moment the usual routine of family life to which Julia continued to impart the movement of her active imagination. However, he ceased to lend himself with the same affectionate familiarity to the caprices of his step-daughter. She noticed it; but she was not the only one who did. Lucan detected surprise in the eyes of Monsieur de Moras, reproaches in those of Clotilde. A new danger appeared before him; he was acting in a

manner which it was equally impossible, equally perilous to explain or to allow being interpreted.

With time, however, the frightful light that had flashed across his brain in a recent circumstance was growing gradually fainter ; it had ceased to fill his mind with the same convincing force. He conceived doubts ; he accused himself at times of a veritable aberration ; he charged the baroness with cruel and guilty prejudices ; he thought, in a word, that, at all events, the wisest course was to avoid believing in the drama, and giving it life by taking a serious part in it. Unfortunately Julia's disposition, full of surprises and unforeseen whims, scarcely admitted of any regular plan of conduct towards her.

One beautiful afternoon, the guests of the château accompanied by a few of the neighbors, had gone on a horseback excursion to the extremity of Cape La Hague. On the return home, and when they had come about half way, Julia, who had been remarkably quiet all day, left the principal group of riders, and, casting aside to Monsieur de Lucan an expressive glance, she urged her horse slightly forward. He overtook her almost immediately. She cast upon him again an oblique glance, and abruptly, with her bitterest and most incisive accent :

"Is my presence dangerous to you, sir?"

"How, dangerous?" he said laughingly. "I do not understand you, my dear madame."

"Why do you avoid me? What have I done to you? What means this new and disagreeable manner which you affect towards me? It is really a very strange thing that you should become less polite to me, as I am more so to you. They persecute one for years to induce me to show you a pleasant countenance, and when I try my best to do

so, you pout. What does it mean? What has got into your head? . . . I should be infinitely curious to know."

"It is quite simple, and I am going to enlighten you in two words. It has got into my head that after being not very amiable to me, you are now almost too much so. . . I am sincerely touched and charmed at it; but I really fear, sometimes, to turn too much to my own profit attentions to which I am far from having the sole right. You know how fond I am of your husband. . . . There can be no question of jealousy in this case, of course; but a man's love is proud and prompt to take umbrage. Without stooping to low and otherwise impossible sentiments, Pierre, seeing himself somewhat neglected, might feel offended and afflicted, at which we would both be greatly grieved, would we not?"

"I do not know how to do anything half way," she said with a gesture of impatience. "How can I change my nature? It is with my own heart, and not with that of another, that I love and that I hate . . . and then, . . . why should it not enter into my plans to excite Pierre's jealousy? . . . My old traditional hatred for you has perhaps made this deep calculation: He would kill either you or me, and that would be as good a denouement as any other."

"You must allow me to prefer another," said Lucan, still trying, but without much success, to give a cheerful turn to this wildly passionate conversation.

"However," she went on, "you may rest easy, my dear sir. Pierre is not jealous. . . . He suspects nothing, as they say in plays!"

She laughed one of her wicked laughs, and added at once in a graver tone:

"And what could he suspect? In being amiable towards you, I am merely acting under orders, . . . and no one can tell how much of it is genuine and how much put on."

"I feel quite certain that you don't know yourself," he said laughingly. "You are a person of naturally restless disposition; you require agitation, and when there is none you try to imitate it as best as you can. Whether you like, or whether you don't like your step-father, is not a very dramatic affair. . . . There is no room here for any but very simple and very ordinary sentiments. . . . It is well enough to complicate them a little . . . is it not, my dear?"

"Yes,—my *dear!*" she said, emphasizing ironically the last word.

Whereupon she started her horse at a gallop.

They were then just reaching the edge of the woods. He soon saw her leave the direct road that led across them, and take a path over the heath as if intending to dash through the thickest of the timber. At the same instant Clotilde ran up to him, and touching his shoulder with the tip of her whip:

"Where in the world is Julia going?" she said.

Lucan replied with a vague gesture and a smile.

"I am sure," rejoined Clotilde, "that she is going to drink at that fountain, yonder. . . . She was complaining a little while since of being thirsty. . . . Do follow her, dear, will you, and prevent her doing so. . . . She is so warm! It might be fatal to her. . . . Run, I beg of you."

Monsieur de Lucan gave the reins to his horse, and he started like the wind. Julia had already disappeared under cover of the woods. He followed her track; but

among the timber, the roots and the roughness of the ground somewhat checked his speed. At a short distance, in the centre of a narrow clearing, the labor of ages and the filtrations of the soil had hollowed out one of those mysterious fountains whose limpid water, moss-grown banks, and aspect of deep solitude delight the imagination, and give rise to so many poetic legends. When Monsieur de Lucan was able once more to see Julia, she had alighted from her horse. The admirably trained animal stood quietly two or three steps away, browsing the young foliage, while his mistress, down on her knees and stooping over the edge of the spring, was drinking from her hands.

“Julia, I beg of you!” exclaimed Monsieur de Lucan in an imploring tone.

She started to her feet with a sort of elastic spring, and greeted him gayly.

“Too late,—sir!” she said; “but I only drank a few drops, just a few little wee drops, I assure you!”

“You must really be out of your mind!” said Lucan who was by this time quite close to her.

“Do you think so?”

She was shaking her beautiful white hands, which had served her for a drinking-cup, and which seemed to throw off a shower of diamonds.

“Give me your handkerchief!”

Lucan handed her his handkerchief. She wiped her hands gravely; then, as she returned the handkerchief with her right hand, she raised herself on tiptoe and held her left hand up to the level of his face:

“There! now; don’t scold any more!”

Lucan kissed the hand.

"The other now," she said again. "Please don't turn so pale, sir!"

Monsieur de Lucan affected not to have heard these last words, and came down abruptly from his horse.

"I must help you to mount," he said in a dry and harsh voice.

She was putting on her gloves with downcast look. Suddenly raising her head and looking at him with fixed gaze :

"What a miserable wretch I am, am I not?" she said.

"No," said Lucan; "but what an unhappy being!"

She leaned against one of the trees that shaded the spring, her head partially thrown back and one hand over her eyes.

"Come!" said Lucan.

She obeyed, and he assisted her to get on her horse. They rode out of the wood without uttering another word, made their way to the road, and soon overtook the cavalcade.

As soon as he had recovered from the anguish of that scene, Monsieur de Lucan did not hesitate to think that the departure of Julia and of her husband must be the immediate and inevitable consequence of it; but when he came to seek some means of bringing about their sudden departure, his mind became lost in difficulties that he could not solve. What motive could he indeed offer to justify, in the eyes of Clotilde and of Monsieur de Moras, a determination so novel and so unexpected? It was now the middle of August, and it had been agreed for a long time that the entire family should return to Paris on the first of September. The very proximity of the term

fixed upon for the general departure would only serve to make the pretext invoked to explain this sudden separation appear more unlikely. It was almost impossible that it should not awaken in the mind of Clotilde, and in that of the count, irreparable suspicions and a light fatal to the happiness of both. The remedy seemed indeed more to be dreaded than the evil itself; for, if the evil was great, it was at least unknown to those whose lives and whose hearts it would have shattered, and it could still be hoped that it might remain so forever. Monsieur de Lucan thought for a moment of going away himself; but it was still more impossible to justify his departure than it was that of Julia's.

All these reflections being made, he resolved to arm himself with patience and courage. Once in Paris, separate dwellings, less frequent intercourse, the obligations of the world, and the activity of life, would doubtless afford first relief and then a peaceful solution to a painful and formidable situation which it was henceforth impossible for him not to view in its true light. He relied upon himself, and also upon Julia's natural generosity, for reaching without outburst and without rupture the approaching term that was to put an end to their life in common and to its incessant perils. It ought not to be impossible to conjure, for the short period of two weeks more, the explosion of a storm that had been brewing for months without revealing its lightning. He was forgetting with what frightful rapidity the maladies of the soul, as well as those of the body, after reaching slowly and gradually certain fatal stages, suddenly precipitate their progress and their ravages.

Monsieur de Lucan asked himself whether he should

not inform Julia of the conduct he had resolved to follow, and of the reasons that had dictated it ; but every shadow of an explanation between them appeared to him eminently improper and dangerous. Their confidential understanding upon such a subject would have assumed an air of complicity which was repugnant to all his sentiments of honor. Despite the terrible light that had flashed forth, there still remained between them something obscure, undecided, and unconfessed that he thought best to preserve at any cost. Far, therefore, from seeking opportunities for some private interview, he avoided them all from that moment with scrupulous care. Julia seemed penetrated with the same feeling of reserve, and anxious to the same degree as himself to avoid any tête-à-tête, while striving to save appearances : but in that respect she did not dispose of that power of dissimulation which Lucan owed to his natural and acquired firmness. He was able, without visible effort, to hide under his habitual air of gravity the anxieties that consumed him. Julia did not succeed, without an almost convulsive constraint, in carrying with bold and smiling countenance the burden of her thought. To the only witness who knew the secret of her struggles, it was a poignant spectacle to behold the gracious and feverish animation of which the unhappy child sustained the appearance with so much difficulty. He saw her sometimes at a distance, like an exhausted comedienne, retiring to some isolated bench in the garden, and fairly panting with her hand pressing upon her bosom, as if to keep down her rebellious heart. He felt then, in spite of all, overcome with immense pity in presence of so much beauty and so much misery.

Was it only pity?

The attitude, the words, the looks of Clotilde and of Julia's husband were at the same time, for Monsieur de Lucan, the object of constant and uneasy observation. Clotilde had evidently not conceived the slightest alarm. The gentle serenity of her features remained unaltered. A few oddities, more or less, in Julia's ways did not constitute a sufficient novelty to attract her particular attention. Her mind, moreover, was too far away from the monstrous abysses yawning at her side: she might have stepped into them and been swallowed up, before she had suspected their existence.

The blond, placid, and handsome countenance of the Count de Moras retained at all times, like Lucan's dark face, a sort of sculptural firmness. It was, therefore, rather difficult to read upon it the impressions of a soul which was naturally strong and self-controlling. On one point, however, that soul had become weak. Monsieur de Lucan was not ignorant of the fact; he was aware of the count's ardent love for Julia, and of the sickly susceptibility of his passion.

It seemed unlikely that such a sentiment, if it were seriously set at defiance, should not betray itself in some violent or at least perceptible exterior sign. Monsieur de Lucan, in reality, was unable to observe any of these dreaded symptoms. If he did occasionally surprise a fugitive wrinkle on his brow, a doubtful intonation, a fugitive or absent glance, he might believe at most in some return of that vague and chimerical jealousy with which he knew the count to have been long tormented. Besides, he saw him carrying into their family circle the same impassive and smiling face, and he continued to receive from

him the same tokens of cordiality. Oppressed nevertheless by his legitimate scruples of loyalty and friendship, he had for one moment the mad temptation of revealing to the count the trial that was imposed upon them; but while relieving his own heart, would not such a delicate and cruel confession break the heart of his friend? And, moreover, would not such a pretended act of loyalty, involving the betrayal of a woman's secret, be tainted with cowardice and treason?

It was necessary, therefore, amid so many dangers and so much anxiety, to sustain alone, and to the end, the weight of that trial, more complicated and more perilous still, perhaps, than Monsieur de Lucan was willing to admit to himself.

It was to come to an end much sooner than he could possibly have anticipated.

Clotilde and her husband, accompanied by Monsieur and Madame de Moras, went one day, in the carriage, to visit the ruins of a covered gallery which is one of the rarest of druidical antiquities in the country. These ruins lay at the back of a picturesque little bay, scooped out in the rocky wall that borders the eastern shore of the peninsula. Their shapeless masses are strewn over one of those grass-clad spurs that extend here and there to the foot of the cliff like giant buttresses. They are reached, despite the steepness of the hill, by an easy, winding road that leads, with long, meandering turns, down to the yellow, sandy beach of the little bay. Clotilde and Julia made a sketch of the old Celtic temple while the gentlemen were smoking; then they amused themselves for some time watching the rising waves spreading upon the sand its fringes of foam. It was agreed to re-

turn to the top of the hill on foot in order to relieve the horses.

The carriage, on a sign from Lucan, started ahead. Clotilde took the arm of Monsieur de Moras, and they began ascending slowly the sinuous road. Lucan was waiting Julia's good pleasure before following them; she had remained a few steps aside, engaged in animated conversation with an old fisherman who was busy setting his bait in the hollow of the rocks. She turned towards Lucan, and slightly raising her voice:

"He says there is another path, much shorter and quite easy, close by here, along the face of the cliff. I am strongly inclined to take it and avoid that tiresome road."

"Believe me, do nothing of the kind," said Lucan; "what is a very easy path for the country people may prove a very arduous one for you and even for me."

After further conference with the fisherman:

"He says," rejoined Julia, "that there is really no danger, and that children go up and down that way every day. He is going to guide me to the foot of the path, and then I'll only have to go straight up. Tell mother I'll be up there as soon as you all are."

"Your mother will be dreadfully anxious."

"Tell her there is no danger."

Lucan, giving up the attempt to resist any longer a fancy that was growing impatient, went up to the footman who carried Julia's album and shawl; he requested him to reassure Clotilde and Monsieur de Moras, who had already disappeared behind one of the angles of the road; then returned to Julia.

"Whenever you are ready," he said.

“ You are coming with me ? ”

“ As a matter of course.”

The old fisherman preceded them, following close to the foot of the cliffs. After leaving the sandy beach of the bay, the shore was covered with angular rocks and gigantic fragments of granite that made walking extremely painful. Although the distance was very short, they were already breaking down with fatigue when they reached the entrance of the path, which appeared to Lucan, and perhaps to Julia herself, much less safe and commodious than the fisherman had pretended. Neither one nor the other, however, attempted to make any objection. After a few last recommendations and directions, their old guide withdrew, quite pleased with Lucan's generosity. Both began then resolutely to scale the cliff which, at this point of the coast, is known as the cliff of Jobourg, and rises some three hundred feet above the level of the ocean.

At the beginning of this ascension, they broke the silence they had hitherto maintained, in order to exchange some jesting remarks upon the charms and comforts of this goats'-path ; but the real and even alarming difficulties of the road soon proved sufficient to absorb their entire attention. The faintly beaten track disappeared at times on the barren rock, or under some recent land-slide. They had much trouble finding the broken thread again. Their feet hesitated upon the polished surface of the stone, or the short and slippery grass. There were moments when they felt as if they stood on an almost vertical slope, and if they attempted to stop and take breath, the vast spaces stretching before them, the boundless extent, the dazzling and metallic brilliancy of the sea, caused them a

sensation of dizziness and as of a floating motion. Though the sky was low and cloudy, a heavy and storm-laden heat weighed upon them and stimulated the action of their blood. Lucan walked first, with a sort of feverish excitement, turning around from time to time to cast a glance at Julia, who followed him closely, then looking up to seek some resting-point, some platform upon which they might breathe for a moment in safety. But above him, as below, there was naught save the perpendicular and sometimes overhanging cliff. Suddenly Julia called out to him in a tone of anguish.

"Monsieur! monsieur! please, oh! please . . . my head is whirling!"

He walked rapidly back a few steps at the risk of tumbling down, and, grasping her hand energetically:

"Come! come!" he said with a smile, "what is the matter? . . . a brave person like you!"

"It would require wings!" she said, faintly.

Lucan began at once to climb the path again, supporting, and almost dragging Julia, who had nearly fainted.

He had at last the gratification of setting his foot upon a projection of the ground, a sort of narrow esplanade jutting from the rock. He succeeded in drawing Julia upon it. But she sank at once in his arms, and her head rested upon his chest. He could hear her arteries and her heart throbbing with frightful force. Then, gradually, her agitation subsided. She lifted her head gently, opened her long eyelashes, and looking at him with rapturous eyes:

"I am so happy!" she murmured; "I wish I could die so!"

Lucan pushed her off from him the length of his arm,

then, suddenly seizing her again and clasping her tightly to his heart, he cast upon her a troubled glance, and then another upon the abyss. She certainly thought they were about to die. A slight tremor passed upon her lips; she smiled; her head half rolled back:

“With you?” she said . . . “what happiness!”

At the same moment, the sound of voices was heard a short distance above them. Lucan recognized Clotilde’s and the count’s voices. His arm suddenly relaxed and dropped from Julia’s waist. He pointed out to her, without speaking, but with an imperious gesture, the path that wound around the rock.

“Without you, then!” she said, in a gentle and proud tone. And she began ascending.

Two minutes later, they reached the plateau above the cliff, and related to Clotilde the perils of their ascension, which explained sufficiently their evident agitation. At least they thought so.

During the evening of this same day, Julia, Monsieur de Moras, and Clotilde were walking after dinner under the evergreens of the garden. Monsieur de Lucan, after keeping them company for a short time, had just retired, under pretence of writing some letters. He remained, however, but a few moments in the library, where the sound of the others’ voices reached his ears and disturbed his attention. A desire for absolute solitude, for meditation, perhaps also some whimsical and unaccountable feeling, led him to that very ladies’ walk stamped for him with such an indelible recollection. He walked slowly through it for some time, in the deepening shades with which the falling night was rapidly filling it. He wished to consult his soul, as it were, face to face, to probe

like a man his mind to its utmost depths. What he discovered there terrified him. It was a mad intoxication, which the savor of crime further heightened. Duty, loyalty, honor, all that rose before his passion to oppose it only exasperated its fury. The pagan Venus was gnawing at his heart, and instilling her most subtle poisons into it. The image of the fatal beauty was there without truce, present in his burning brain, before his dazzled eyes; he aspired with avidity and in spite of himself, its languor, its perfume, its breath.

The sound of light footsteps upon the sand caused him to suspend his march. He caught through the darkness a glimpse of a white form approaching him.

It was she!

Without giving scarce a thought to the act, he threw himself behind the obscure angle formed by one of those massive pillars that supported the ruins against the side of the hill. A mass of verdure made the darkness there more dense still. She went by, her eyes fixed upon the ground, with her supple and rhythmical step. She walked as far as the little pond that received the waters of the brook, stood dreaming for a few moments upon its edge, and then returned. A second time she went by the ruins, without raising her eyes, and as if deeply absorbed. Lucan remained convinced that she had not suspected his presence, when suddenly she turned her head slightly around, without interrupting her march, and she cast behind her that single word, "Farewell," in a tone so gentle, so musical, so sorrowful, that it was somewhat like the sound of a tear falling upon a sonorous crystal.

That minute was a supreme one. It was one of those moments during which a man's life is decided for eternal

good or for eternal evil. Monsieur de Lucan felt it so. Had he yielded to the attraction of passion, of intoxication, of pity, that was urging him with almost irresistible force on the footsteps of that beautiful and unhappy woman,—that was the point of casting him at her feet, upon her heart,—he felt that he became at once and forever a lost and desperate soul. Such a crime, were it even to remain wholly ignored, separated him forever from all he had ever respected, all he had ever held sacred and inviolate: there was nothing left for him either upon earth or in heaven: there was no longer any faith, probity, honor, friend, or God! The whole moral world vanished for him in that single instant.

He accepted her farewell, and made no reply. The white form moved away and soon disappeared in the darkness.

The evening was spent in the home circle as usual. Julia, pale, moody, and haughty, worked silently at her tapestry. Lucan observed that on taking leave of her mother she was kissing her with unusual effusion.

He soon retired also. Assailed by the most formidable apprehensions, he did not undress. Towards morning only, he threw himself all dressed upon his bed. It was about five o'clock, and scarcely daylight as yet, when he fancied he heard muffled steps on the carpet in the hall and on the stairs. He rose again at once. The windows of his room opened upon the court. He saw Julia cross it, dressed in riding costume. She went into the stable and came out again after a few moments. A groom brought her her horse, and assisted her in mounting. The man, accustomed to Julia's somewhat eccentric man-

ners, saw apparently nothing alarming in that fancy for an early ride.

Monsieur de Lucan, after a few minutes of excited thought, took his resolution. He directed his steps towards the room of the Count de Moras. To his extreme surprise, he found him up and dressed. The count, seeing Lucan coming in, seemed struck with astonishment. He fastened upon him a penetrating and visibly agitated look.

“What is the matter?” he said at last, in a low and tremulous voice.

“Nothing serious, I hope,” replied Lucan. “Nevertheless, I am uneasy. . . . Julia has just gone out on horse-back. . . . You have, doubtless, seen and heard her as I have myself, since you are up.”

“Yes,” said Moras, who had continued to gaze upon Lucan with an expression of indescribable stupor; “yes,” he repeated, recovering himself, not without difficulty and I am glad, really very glad to see you, my dear friend.”

While uttering these simple words, the voice of Moras became hesitating; a damp cloud obscured his eyes.

“Where can she be going at this hour?” he resumed with his usual firmness of speech.

“I do not know; merely some new fancy, I suppose. At any rate, she has seemed to me lately more strange, more moody, and I feel uneasy. Let us try and follow her, if you like.”

“Let us go, my friend,” said the count after a pause of singular hesitation.

They both left the chateau together, taking their fowling-pieces with them, in order to induce the belief

that they were going, according to quite a frequent habit, to shoot sea-birds. At the moment of selecting a direction, Monsieur de Moras turned to Lucan with an inquiring glance.

"I see no danger," said Lucan, "save in the direction of the cliffs. A few words that escaped her yesterday lead me to fear that the peril may be there; but with her horse, she is compelled to make a long *détour*. . . . By cutting across the woods, we'll be there ahead of her."

They entered the timber to the west of the *château*, and walked in silence and with rapid steps. The path they had taken led them directly to the plateau overlooking the cliffs they had visited the previous day. The woods extended in that direction in an irregular triangle, the last trees of which almost touched the very brink of the cliff. As they were approaching with feverish steps that extreme point, Lucan suddenly stopped.

"Listen!" he said.

The sound of a horse's gallop upon the hard soil could be distinctly heard. They ran.

A sloping bank of moderate elevation divided the wood from the plateau. This they climbed half way with the help of trailing branches; screened then by the bushes and the foliage, they beheld before them a most impressive spectacle: at a short distance to the left, Julia was coming on at break-neck speed; she was following the oblique line of the woods, apparently shaping her course straight towards the edge of the cliff. They thought at first that her horse had run away, but they saw that she was lashing him with her whip to further accelerate his speed.

She was still some hundred paces from the two men, and she was about passing before them. Lucan was preparing to leap to the other side of the bank, when the hand of Monsieur de Moras fell violently upon his arm and held him back firmly. . . . They looked at each other. . . . Lucan was amazed at the profound alteration that had suddenly contracted the count's features and sunken his eyes; he read at the same time in his fixed gaze an immense sorrow, but also an immovable resolve. He understood that there was no longer any secret between them. He yielded to that glance, which, so far as he was concerned—he felt sure of that—conveyed nothing but an expression of confidence and friendly supplication. He grasped his friend's hand within his own and remained motionless. The horse shot by within a few steps of them, his flanks white with foam, while Julia, beautiful, graceful, and charming still in that terrible moment, sat lightly upon the saddle.

Within a few feet of the edge of the cliff, the horse, scenting the danger, shied violently and wheeled around in a semi-circle. She led him back upon the plateau, and, urging him both with voice and whip, she started him again towards the yawning chasm. The animal refusing once more to advance against that formidable obstacle, Julia, with hair undone, flashing eyes, and expanded nostrils, turned him around and backed him gradually to the crest of the cliff. The horse, snorting, rearing, rose almost straight, and stood out in relief at his full height against the gray morning sky.

Lucan felt Monsieur de Moras' nails cutting into his flesh. At last the horse was conquered: the ground gave way under his hind feet, which only met the va-

cant space. He fell backward; his forelegs pawed the air convulsively.

The next moment the plateau was empty. No sound had been heard. In that deep chasm the fall had been noiseless and death instantaneous.

THE END.



BELLAH.

B E L L A H.

I.

“That knight you see yonder with gilded armor—’tis the valiant Laurcalco, Lord of the Silver Bridge; that other is the redoubtable Micocolembó, Grand-duke of Quirocia.”—*Don Quixote*.

ON the shores of a small bay cut out by the ocean on the southern coast of Finisterre, lies the small village of F——, which, before it had become infested by artists, contained some very pretty women with charming costumes. Unfortunately, artists came; the women of F—— learned that they had much color and style—in short, that they were picturesque; and so they begin to wear awkwardly their national garments, and to seem ill at ease under the maternal caps.

In the year of grace 1795, the happy calm enjoyed by this little village, placidly seated between the ocean and the Revolution, was a phenomenon worthy of note. Forgotten, as it were, by the Republic, which had respected their barks, their wives, and their houses, the worthy inhabitants of F—— had themselves almost forgotten the Republic. It was not, therefore, without a good deal of surprise and some confusion that, on the morning of the

twelfth of June, 1795, the good people, on opening their doors and windows, discovered on the Church Square the blue uniforms and red plumes of the grenadiers of the Republic. A detachment of fifty men, preceded by two mounted officers, had indeed just entered the town. One of these officers wore a major's epaulets, which seemed to indicate that the expedition was not without importance. Behind the little column several saddle-horses were led by a Breton peasant, rigidly attired in the old national costume.

At the same moment the worthy fishermen of F—— beheld their perplexities further increased by another and equally unwonted spectacle : a frigate—an English frigate in all probability—had just appeared to the south of their bay, evidently manœuvring to approach the shore as near as prudence allowed a vessel of that size to do. The idea that suggested itself simultaneously and at once in their minds, and in those of the soldiers scattered upon the beach, was that the frigate intended to land an invading force, and that the object of the expedition was to resist their landing.

Prodigiously unequal as the prospective struggle seemed likely to be, but little surprise was manifested among the soldiers, accustomed as they were to the daring and almost foolhardy heroism which the Republic exacted almost daily of her children. The question, however, was being hotly discussed in a group of five or six young grenadiers, whose inexperience had prompted them, in presence of this imminent crisis, to seek the advice of an old sergeant with gray mustaches. This personage, called Bruidoux, instead of replying at once to the questions of his inferiors, thought proper to

previously affirm his dignity. He took out of his hat a small blue, checked handkerchief, spread it carefully on the sand, and sat down with due majesty upon this modest carpet. Then drawing some tobacco out of a leathern pouch, he began filling a short clay pipe with the methodic circumspection of a man who knows the value of things. After having passed his thumb over the orifice of the bowl so as to equalize the surface of the precious weed, Bruidoux took a tinder-box out of his pocket and began striking it ceremoniously. When the lighted pipe had at last been securely lodged in one corner of his mouth, the grave sergeant stretched himself at full length upon the sand, interposed his two joined hands between the back of his head and the damp sand, and puffing towards the sky enormous clouds of smoke :

“Now,” said he, “what was it you were doing me the honor of objecting, Colibri?”

“It wasn’t me, sergeant,” replied the fat-cheeked and ungainly youth whom Bruidoux had just designated by the friendly sobriquet of Colibri; “it’s the boys who say that this great big ship is going to land a whole lot of *ci-devant*,* and that we are here to prevent it. Do you believe such a thing, sergeant?”

* The word *ci-devant* simply means *formerly*. The Republic had decreed the abolition of everything connected with the old régime, titles, religion, etc.; but many things could not be obliterated by a mere legislative enactment, and it had become customary to refer to all such as *ci-devant*, as for instance: *ci-devant* aristocrat, *ci-devant* count, *ci-devant* church, and even *ci-devant* God; gradually the word came to be applied to any and every thing that was opposed or apparently opposed to the Republic or the spirit of its institutions. We have retained the original word wherever it occurs.—TRANS.

“To such a question,” replied Bruidou, “a learned man might make fifty different answers. For my part, Colibri, I will only make two: *primo*, I believe so; *secundo*, I hope so.”

At those words, to which the mouth that had uttered them imparted a sibylline authority, the young grenadiers looked furtively at each other, shaking their heads ominously.

“But, sergeant,” rejoined Colibri timidly, “if we have come here to fight, what will be the use of the saddle-horses which that tall peasant with the long hair was leading behind us?”

“Those horses,” said the sergeant after a minute of reflection, “are in all probability intended for prisoners of distinction.”

“Look! look!” suddenly exclaimed Colibri, “the frigate has come to a stand-still!”

Sergeant Bruidou, leaving his nonchalant attitude, raised himself on his elbow, placed his hand over his eyes in the form of an awning, and examined the frigate attentively for a moment.

“They are lying-to,” he remarked; “and if I am not mistaken, they are launching their boats. In about an hour, my boys, the fun will begin.”

Whereupon Bruidou knocked off the ashes from his pipe, and preparing to fill it for the second time with as much tender care as the first:

“One thing may be pleasant for you to know, Colibri,” he added; “it is that we are out of range of their guns. If this coast, instead of being scattered with rocks over a league from shore, was a coast like some I have seen, alongside of which a three-decker can sail

as quietly as a lady in her parlor, the frigate, you see, would have brought her broadside to bear on our left, whilst the landing-force would have attacked us on the right. In that way, we would have been at once fired upon in front and raked in flank, which would have made our situation really critical."

In the meantime, the leader of the republican troops, posted upon a rock, was examining through a field-glass the movements of the English vessel. This personage, who did not seem more than twenty-five years of age, wore the cumbersome uniform of a major of the Republic with an elegance somewhat uncommon in the military habits of that period. The style of beauty stamped on his countenance, the delicacy of his features, his noble brow and gently pensive eyes contrasting with the firm lines of his mouth, revealed at a glance a man of noble birth, and would have secured him flattering attention among any gathering of women. A few steps behind him stood a young man of scarce nineteen, with blonde hair and rosy cheeks, wearing the light uniform of an aid-de-camp: this youth figured in the capacity of lieutenant on the staff of General Hoche, and for the past few days had been sharing with the young major the command of the expeditionary column.

"Major Hervé!" suddenly shouted the younger officer, noticing that the tide was covering the rock on which stood his superior, "I warn you that the tide is rising; you'll soon stand knee-deep in water."

The major started like a man roused from sleep, cast around him a surprised glance, and seeing that his boots were already submerged up to the ankle, he sprang upon the beach, muttering an imprecation, the subdued

and discreet character of which announced refined habits: for a well-bred man differs from a vulgar boor even in the coarse expressions that may escape him while laboring under the surprises of passion. Then, pushing back the tubes of his field-glass one into the other, the young man began walking rapidly on the sand, without any other apparent object but to quiet a great agitation of mind.

The anxious soldiers did not lose a single gesture of their chief. Suddenly an exclamation starting from the group attracted the old sergeant's attention towards the sea: he discovered then with surprise that only one single boat had left the frigate and was rowing towards the shore, whilst the noble ship was going about two leagues from the coast.

"They are sending us a flag of truce," remarked Bruidoux; "that's what may be called prudent conduct, to say the least of it. You who have eyes like a stuffed eagle, Colibri, will you do me the favor of informing me what you see in that skiff?"

"With all respect, sergeant, I think I see half a dozen petticoats in it."

"Then," said Bruidoux, "they must be Scotchmen. I know, in all the armies of the civilized world, but the Scotch who wear skirts."

"Sergeant," replied Colibri, "do Scotchmen wear linen caps too?"

"Caps?" said Bruidoux; "I think not. You mean turbans?"

"There is certainly at least one tall linen cap, sergeant. I rather think they must be Scotchwomen."

"Everything is possible," replied the sergeant, lying down again philosophically; "but if women are going to take a hand,—good-by."

During this conversation, Major Hervé, seated on the keel of an upturned boat, was tracing cabalistic figures upon the sand with the point of his scabbard, while his absent eyes seemed to read invisible words in the confused world of recollections and hopes. A hand gently laid upon his shoulder roused him from his reverie; at the same time a clear and almost childish voice said behind him:

"Well, this is a happy moment for you, Pelven?"

"Happy! Francis," replied the young man, smiling pensively, "I don't know. I have already lived long enough to know that a moment can only be called happy or unhappy after it has passed."

"How!" rejoined Francis, questioning with an eye beaming with affection the melancholy gaze of his friend, "is not this boat about to throw into your arms your beloved sister? Isn't that the happiness after which you have been sighing for two years?"

"And do I even know," said Pelven, "whether I am going to find her the sister I remember and I hope to see? She has lived so long among my enemies! She learns from everything that surrounds her to hate the uniform I wear."

"No, no, that cannot be!" exclaimed the young aid-de-camp with a vivacity that suffused his brow with a sudden blush. "What you have told me of her, what you have shown me of her letters, is enough to convince me that such a suspicion is impossible, unworthy!"

"And then," replied Hervé, smiling at the young

man's chivalrous excitement, "my sister is not coming alone. Several persons accompany her who, I am sure, do not love me, and you may understand, Francis, that it is painful to me to see only coldness and hostility upon once familiar and friendly faces."

"Would there be any extraordinary indiscretion, Major Hervé, in asking you the enumeration of the feminine crew of the boat?"

"In these times, when politeness is one of the rarest of pearls, Lieutenant Francis, it is impossible for me not to satisfy a curiosity expressed with such punctilious propriety. I shall say nothing of Mademoiselle Andrée de Pelven, my sister, of whom I have doubtless already spoken but too much to you." Francis blushed again. "But," the major went on, "you have excused that weakness of a brother. Besides that young person, the boat you see yonder, half a league from the shore, is honored with the presence of Madame Eléonore de Kergant, formerly a canoness; she is a sister of the Marquis de Kergant, my tutor; she is also the fiercest enemy of the French Republic that I know of, and the most faithful friend whom etiquette, high breeding, and rice powder have retained in this age of abomination. Behind that lady, and at a respectful distance, you may see a young Breton girl who once promised to become one of the loveliest creatures that ever charmed the eyes of man. Her name is Alix, and she is a daughter of Citizen Kado, that tall Breton guide who brought the horses, and whom you see leaning against yonder mast. Alix was brought up at the chateau, where she lives in a sort of mixed condition: she is not a young lady, and yet she is not a servant; she has white hands, and can spell. Finally, at a still more

respectful distance, you may or may not remark a waiting-maid, English, Scotch, or something else, one Miss MacGregor, who numbers heads of clans among her ancestors, and whom misfortunes of some sort have driven into servitude. As she has but recently entered the service of the canoness, I have never seen her ; nevertheless if you wish to have a description of her, here it is: she is a tall and clumsy person, with red hair, and who takes snuff privately. Are you satisfied, Francis ? ”

“ Not yet, major ; for, if I am not mistaken, there are five women in the boat, and you have only named four.”

“ You are right,” replied Hervé de Pelven ; and he added, with an embarrassment that did not escape his friend, “ there is still, or at least there ought to be—for I cannot distinguish anything at that distance—Mademoiselle Bellah de Kergant, daughter of the marquis and niece to the canoness. That name of Bellah is a traditional one in the family, from the days of the Conans and the Alains.”

“ What ! is that all ? ” asked Francis. “ Not a word of praise or criticism ? Here I am compelled to think that the young lady must be either deformed or perfect, since your pencil dares not or deigns not describe her.”

“ It is always a delicate matter to speak of one’s enemies,” said Hervé, “ and I have the regret of numbering Mademoiselle de Kergant among the most ardent adversaries of the cause I uphold. She is my sister’s friend ; I may say that she entertained towards me for many years the feelings of a sister ; but I am now for her but a wretch stained with the blood of her king, soiled with the dust of all her ruined relics. . . . ”

A minute of silence followed these words, which the

young major had uttered in a feeling and vibrating voice ; then he added :

“ You will see her, Francis ; you’ll tell me then whether a painter ever stamped upon a more divine face the purity of a virgin and the soul of a martyr.”

Hervé interrupted himself again, and it was only after turning his head aside to conceal the alteration of his features that he added :

“ It is sometimes a very severe struggle, Monsieur Francis, that of the principles and duties of manhood against the cherished sentiments of childhood ! ”

The young major, after speaking these words, rose and walked hastily a few steps on the beach, while the little lieutenant remained standing where he had just received this semi-avowal, with moist eyes and brow shaded with a melancholy cloud, to which the habitual levity of his physiognomy imparted a touching character.

We will avail ourselves of the brief interval which still separates the English boat from the shore, to complete as briefly as possible an exposition which is unfortunately indispensable to the simplest narrative.

Hervé and his sister, left orphans at an early age, had been bequeathed to the guardianship of the Marquis de Kergant, an old friend of the Count de Pelven, their father. The two children had found at the fireside of the loyal gentleman a fraternal place by the side of Bellah, his only daughter, and had shared with her the benefits of an education replete with severe solicitude.

At the age of sixteen, Hervé was sent to college in Paris, and only left it to enter the military school of Brienne. During every summer, the young man came to spend a few weeks at the Chateau de Kergant ; but while he still

entertained the same grateful veneration for his guardian and the same tender affection for the two charming sisters, who always greeted him with tearful eyes, he had felt from year to year new ideas take the place of the principles with which his childhood had been nurtured. The day when the marquis heard the fatal issue of King Louis XVI.'s journey to Varennes, foreseeing the desperate effort by which the Breton nobility would signalize their devotion to their religion and their king, he had suddenly recalled his ward. Hervé obeyed, and returned to Kergant. There he spent some months in cruel anxiety of mind, swayed between the powerful recollections of his heart and the deep convictions of his mind. Then he took his resolution, and left secretly for Paris. A short time after, M. de Kergant was informed, in a respectful letter, that the son of the Count of Pelven had enlisted as a volunteer in the service of the Republic. From that day, though Mademoiselle de Pelven could notice in her guardian's conduct towards her increased attention and kindness, she dared not mention her brother's name, preferring to see him forgotten than insulted. The other inhabitants of the chateau observed strictly the same reserve, thus manifesting equal reprobation of Hervé's course, though this feeling assumed distinct shades according to the ideas and disposition of each.

The marquis absolutely considered his old friend's son as a renegade and a felon, who, a traitor alike to God and to the king, deserved no pardon either in this world or the next. Madame de Kergant, the canoness, saw her brother's former ward appearing within the narrow and fantastic field of her prejudices under the most incredible forms; she beheld him brandishing a spear topped with

a bleeding head ; she beheld him attired in an extraordinary *carmagnole*, and dancing wildly the most unbecoming *ça ira* beneath human lanterns ; she beheld him finally frequenting all sorts of improper places in the strange costume which she attributed to the *sans-culottes*, interpreting literally that political denomination.

For the young Bellah, there existed among the revolutionists a man born with the noblest qualities, but misled to the verge of crime and stricken with nameless madness ; she felt such horror for that desertion of all his domestic altars, that never did the proud child wish or dare, from that day, to mingle the traitor's name in the most secret murmurs of her prayers. But perhaps she hoped in the depths of her soul that God would deign to read in her moist eyes the proscribed name which her lips scorned to utter.

Hervé de Pelven's regiment joined the army of the Moselle just as General Hoche was assuming its chief command. Hervé's behavior in a fight at the outposts gained him almost at once the rank of lieutenant. Later, at the attack of the lines of Wissembourg, as his battalion was falling back in disorder before the formidable artillery of an Austrian redoubt, he dashed forward alone upon the fascines, and, by a miracle of audacity and luck, stood there for a minute under a shower of bullets. The republicans, brought back and electrified by his example, found him lying among the dead bodies of the enemies. The commanding general, after witnessing this brilliant feat, desired that the brave young man should retain the command of the battalion he had just saved and made illustrious ; but Hervé had not yet recovered from his terrible wounds when General Hoche,

abandoned for the first time by fortune, ever smiling and ever ready to betray, passed from his victorious camp into the prison of the Committee of Public Safety. In him Hervé lost more than a protector : the affectionate attentions that Hoche had shown him, taking more into consideration similarity of age than the difference of rank, gave him the right to foresee and already to regret a friend in the chief of which he was deprived.

It was at this time that Pelven was informed by a letter dated from London, that his sister Andrée, Mademoiselle Bellah de Kergant, and the canoness had emigrated to England, by order and with the assistance of the marquis ; as to the marquis himself, Andrée's letter made no mention of him. Hervé soon had the painful explanation of this reserve, when he saw, soon after, Monsieur de Kergant's name figuring among those of the royalist chiefs who made in the West such a powerful diversion to the frontier wars of France. From that day forth, the young officer received at close intervals letters from his sister ; the mystery of this correspondence, which could only be kept up through devious ways, impaired the confidence which the converted patrician had gained at first in the republican army, and prevented him from advancing beyond the rank he had conquered with his first steps.

The unpleasantness of this doubtful situation had further intensified the irresistible melancholy with which Hervé had long since felt himself overcome. He had not, indeed, known the full extent of his sacrifice until after he had consummated it. Then only had his feelings, freed from the tumult of his irresolutions, appeared to him in all their sincerity. He had discovered, by the unswerving fidelity of his memory, the more than fraternal impres-

sion which the features of Mademoiselle de Kergant had left him as an avenging souvenir. If Hervé had for a moment cherished any doubts as to the manner in which Bellah must have judged his conduct, Andrée's letters would have sufficiently edified him on that subject. Not only did Mademoiselle de Kergant never add to her friend's letters one word of politeness for the man who had so long been a brother to her, but it was, moreover, evident that Andrée herself was bound in that respect by some inflexible prohibition. So at least Hervé judged by the curtness of this invariable postscript: "Bellah is well." Once only, Andrée ventured to extend the limits of this cruel bulletin, and after the usual formula, "Bellah is well!" Hervé was surprised to read these words: "She is beautiful as a saint." It would be difficult to explain why this little supplement, so womanlike in itself, irritated Hervé to that extent that he began to take for hatred the violent sentiment which the thought of Mademoiselle de Kergant excited in his heart.

In the meantime, the ninth of Thermidor had restored General Hoche to his country. Called soon after to the command of the coast of Brest, he recruited his forces among several corps detached from the army of the North. The 60th half-brigade, in which Pelven served, was the first that Hoche thought of claiming, and Hervé returned under arms to his native land. He found in great favor, near the general, the young man we know under the name of Francis. According to the mysterious gossip of the staff, the still young mother of the child had met the republican general in prison, and had recommended her son to him, as she was leaving for the terrible tribunal whence no one ever returned. Whether simple compliance with

the wishes of a dying mother, or recollection of a tenderer feeling, it is certain that the general entertained a deep affection for the young man.

One winter day in the year 1794, Hoche, returning to his head-quarters with an escort of three battalions, was attacked on the banks of the Vilaine by Stofflet's Whites. From the summit of a mound where he kept himself during the fight, he suddenly saw his young aid-de-camp carried off almost at his feet by five or six partisans. At the same instant, a republican officer, holding his reins between his teeth, rushed upon the hostile group who were dragging away the brave boy, and lifting the prisoner by his coat-collar, brought back this living trophy to the foot of the eminence, amid the applause of the whole staff. By this chivalrous prowess, Hervé had strengthened with a feeling of keen gratitude the friendly interest that Hoche manifested for him. As to Francis, he had conceived for his rescuer a passionate and enthusiastic affection.

A few weeks later, the first pacification of La Vendée and Brittany was signed. Hervé then received from his sister a letter requesting him to obtain for her and her companions in emigration the permission of returning to France; she asked, besides, that an escort of republican soldiers should protect them as far as Kergaut against the *chouans* opposed to the pacification, who might wish to avenge upon them the share which the marquis had taken in that happy result. Notwithstanding the little confidence he placed in that incomplete peace, Hoche did not imagine that the presence of two or three women could increase the fresh dangers which Brittany might be preparing for the Republic. He did not, therefore, hesi-

tate to make that innocent concession to a man to whom he was personally indebted, and whose character inspired him with absolute confidence.

The reader knows now the motives that brought to the village of F—— the detachment of republican grenadiers we have left there but too long.

The English boat was now close upon the shore; she was entering, with the help of the flood-tide, a small cove formed at the base of the beach by a group of rocks. Hervé and Francis approached the rocks to assist in the landing, while the soldiers gathered curiously a few steps behind them. Alone, Sergeant Bruidoux had remained far from there, stretched on his back, watching the flight of the sea-gulls, and protesting by his contemptuous attitude against the diplomatic scene that threatened to give the lie to his prophetic lore. When the boat had come within a few feet of the rocks, the young midshipman in command rose, and, bowing politely to Hervé, inquired whether he had any documents wherewith to prove his right to receive the passengers at present under his charge.

“Why, sir,” interrupted sharply a woman’s voice in the boat, “I assure you that it is my brother!”

Hervé made a friendly sign to the pretty girl who had just spoken; then, taking a paper from his pocket, he stuck it on the point of his sword, and held it out to the midshipman. The latter then read aloud the commission, which was couched in the following terms: “In pursuance of the powers confided to me by the National Convention, I hereby authorize to return and to freely sojourn upon the territory of the Republic the *citoyennes* Eléonore Kergant, spinster and of age, *ci devant* a canoness; Bellah Kergant and Andrée Pelven, spinsters and minors, accom-

panied by the *citoyennes* Alix Kado and MacGregor, their officious attendants. [Signed] Hoche."

During the reading of this document, Madame Eleonore de Kergant thought proper to shrug her shoulders several times, and when it was over, she took the paper from the midshipman's hand, after which the boat came alongside the rocks. Eluding Hervé's politeness, the canoness jumped ashore, dropping a Pompadour curtsey; then turningly hastily around, she offered her hand in turn to each of her companions in exile. Whether by chance or through premeditated cruelty on the part of Madame de Kergant, it was Andrée who landed last.

"Brother!" she exclaimed, throwing her arms around Hervé's neck and wiping with her blonde curls the tears that bathed her burning face, "here you are, then! here you are at last! And, mon Dieu! here you are just as I left you. . . . Isn't it funny, Bellah? I was afraid to find him with his hair all gray!"

"But, my dear child," said Hervé, laughing, "think that it is only two years since we parted."

"Only!" rejoined Bellah; "I think that's quite long enough; two years!"

"Much too long, certainly, but not long enough to make an old man of a young one."

"Well, I am sure I am very glad; but I really thought so," said Andrée, laughing; then kissing her brother once more, she took his arm to walk up to the village. The canoness, on her side, had hurriedly seized Bellah's arm, as if to foil any attempt at politeness of which the republican officer might have conceived the rash intention.

A few steps farther on, the Breton guide was seated on

the gunwale of a boat, holding his daughter's hands in his own, and speaking to her gravely in the antique language of his ancestors. Alix's severe style of beauty was further enhanced by the elegance of her national costume. The regular majesty of her features, lighted by large black eyes, was admirably set off by her tall Breton cap, whose broad white wings were looped up and fastened over the top of the head. Nothing in Alix's attitude or walk betrayed that awkwardness so frequent in the movements of women of the lower class.

Hervé could not help noticing with what splendor the humblest of the companions of his childhood had kept all the promises of her dawning beauty; yet her beauty could hardly bear comparison with that of Bellah, which, though of nearly the same type, had been more refined by delicate culture: it was the same dignity, with less wild fragrance and a more exquisite distinction of form. Bellah looked like the second copy of a divine work, bearing the mark of greater care in the details than the first, and gaining in perfection what it might have lost in primitive power.

While Major Hervé was walking up the beach, listening with delight to his young sister's voice, sweet echo of by-gone years, the little aid-de-camp was moving off slowly, his heart oppressed with that sadness which we feel at the sight of a family rejoicing in which we have no right to share.

II.

“SGANARELLE : Ah ! it is a ghost, sir. I know it by its walk.”—
MOLIERE, *Festin de Pierre*.

ON the order of their commanding officer, the soldiers again took up their arms and fell into line. The women mounted the horses prepared for them, and took their places in the centre of the detachment, which left the village preceded by the game-keeper, Kado. In order to afford the least possible field for conjectures, Hervé, in compliance with the general's orders, was to avoid inhabited places as much as possible, and the little troop soon found itself following the steps of the gigantic guide, over scarcely visible paths, through marshy plains or barren heaths. Hervé, leaving regretfully his sister, to whom the canoness had just addressed an imperative question, rode up alongside the young aid-de-camp, who was marching at the head of the caravan.

“Well, Francis,” he said, “was I wrong in fearing the result of the interview?”

“A thousand times wrong, major, unless you balance in your heart the *cant* of an old white head with the expansive tenderness of that angel, your sister.”

“Certainly not ; but now that you have seen Mademoiselle de Kergant with your own eyes, what do you think of her?”

“She looks rather pleasant, Major Hervé.”

“Really ! pleasant, Lieutenant Francis ? You are moderate in your expressions, sir. And the reception

she gave me, are you kind enough to find that pleasant too?"

"Neither pleasant nor otherwise, *ma foi*, for she gave you none at all; but your sister, Pelven, your charming sister. . . ."

"My charming sister," interrupted Hervé, a trifle out humor, "has no need of being defended, not being attacked, that I know of."

Francis made no answer, but looked at Hervé with an expression of surprise and mortification which quieted at once the major's excitement.

"Why the deuce," he added laughingly, "do you answer me Andrée when I am talking Bellah to you? But really, now, my dear Francis, confess that *Made-moiselle de Kergant* is, so to speak, awfully handsome."

"Awfully is the word," replied Francis. "I picked up her whip a few moments ago. As she thanked me, she fixed her eyes upon mine with such directness and precision, that I shuddered down to the very soles of my feet. I attempted to retort with some polite words, but I was unable to emit anything but a hoarse and indistinct growl, and I must say that I have not forgiven her yet. She possesses extraordinary beauty, no doubt, but a beauty that surprises more than it moves. What a difference, my dear Pelven, with"

"With the canoness," said Hervé quickly; "surely the difference is quite remarkable, and I congratulate you upon having observed it."

While talking, the two young men had gained a considerable advance over the rest of the escort, which was at this moment climbing a steep ascent; the landscape was closed by a ridge of barren hillocks between which

small brooks ran over rocky beds. The line of uniforms, undulating as it followed the sinuosities of the path, the graceful aspect of the female cavalcade, the fluttering veils, the white plumes waving in the wind over the light felt hats of the riders,—all this life, this animation, and these bright colors in this wild site made up a scene of picturesque interest that did not escape the two officers.

“See, Pelven,” exclaimed Francis, “don’t you think you look like an enchanter carrying off into captivity a whole bevy of princesses, . . . and the dowager queen too, of course?”

“I fancy that I look rather more like the enchanted one than like the enchanter,” replied Hervé. “I’ll tell you further, Francis, I don’t like this wild region; I have but a very limited confidence in our guide; he is, in his way, a very honest man, but royalist as the royal tiger himself. I beg you to watch him. There, for instance, what is he doing yonder, let me ask you?”

The game-keeper was following at this moment the edge of a moor cut perpendicularly on his right, and stopped from time to time to push with his foot some fragments of rock in the invisible abyss of the valley.

“Why,” said Francis, “I should say that Citizen Kado is amusing himself in the most innocent manner.”

“The very innocence of the amusement is suspicious to me,” rejoined Hervé. “A man with so grave a character and physiognomy does not indulge without some reason in such child’s play. See, he is listening now; he has just been leaning his head towards the precipice.”

“He is listening to the sound of the stones bounding

from rock to rock, of course. I tell you that this worthy savage has a taste for simple pleasures. . . . ”

“Hark!” interrupted Hervé laying his hand on the young lieutenant’s arm. “Don’t you hear? . . . ”

“Hear what?”

“I heard a whistle, and I saw the guide exchange a glance with the canoness.”

“I heard something like a whistle, or else the sound of the wind through the heather. As to the ogling between the canoness and the savage, I missed it, and I am sorry for it; but, really, major, I cannot understand your apprehensions. Are we not sufficiently protected by your sister’s presence? Do you think that she could countenance a plot of which her own brother would be the first victim?”

“She might not know anything of it.”

“And then, when I look at the powdered head of the canoness, I see very well that it looks like a cane-dealer’s sign on which it has been snowing, but I would never believe it could harbor a sanguinary thought.”

“The old lady is shrewd, lieutenant, however her head may outwardly seem, and I have no doubt that she dabbled extensively in politics while in England. Such as you see her, I should not be a bit surprised if she had held direct intercourse with Pitt.”

“I pity Pitt,” said Francis.

“That may be; but among the ideas that might have germed in that canoness’s brain, what would you think of this, for instance? By drawing into an ambush the major and his escort, they would fasten upon him a suspicion of complicity that would ruin him forever in the eyes of the Republic, and in that way he would find himself

thrown back, willing or not, into the holy royalist cause, eh ! ”

“ Hum ! ” said Francis, “ that is certainly specious ; but they don’t know Major Hervé if they can conceive such a thought.”

“ Passion might blind them to that extent. However, this is mere idle talk ; I only meant to remind you that, after all, we tread on hostile ground, and that it is proper to keep your eyes open.”

“ Rest easy, major ; I’ll watch the guide, the queen-mother, and even . . . ”

“ Even my charming sister ? ” asked Hervé in a low tone of voice.

“ No, Monsieur de Pelven, no ; I would as soon suspect the statue of Innocence itself ; I meant to speak of that beautiful wild-flower, the game-keeper’s daughter.”

It was now the middle of the day ; the caravan was following the curves of a path on both sides of which a plain of mournful aspect extended as far as the eye could reach ; patches of tall furze imparted alone, at intervals, an appearance of culture to this Breton desert ; granite crests covered with black lichens cropped out here and there through the barren soil. Five or six huts seemed lost in the centre of the plateau ; but these land-marks of the presence of man conveyed but little comfort to the traveller’s eye ; they had a gloomy and wretched aspect, well calculated to add a feeling of alarm to the weariness of solitude.

The caravan halted for half an hour in this cheerless oasis. In front of the hut that was nearest the road, a ragged boy, with haggard eye and pallid features, sat on a

rude stool ; he held out alternately each of his hands to the rays of the sun with a look of stupid satisfaction.

“It’s my poor boy, whom God has stricken,” said an old woman who had come out of the hut as she saw Hervé approaching with an air of interest.

Hervé laid a piece of silver in the hand of the unhappy mother, and turned away from this sad spectacle ; but happening to look around suddenly a few minutes later, he was surprised to see the poor boy engaged in animated conversation with the game-keeper. He was pointing towards the north, and speaking with extreme volubility. Noticing that Hervé’s looks were fixed upon him, he fell suddenly again into his stupefied attitude.

“What a pity ! isn’t it, sir ?” said Kado, passing by the young officer. The latter made no reply, but, feeling some distrust for such an intelligent idiot, he took care not to let him renew his intercourse with the guide.

The march was soon resumed, and the hours elapsed without any novel incident coming to confirm Pelven’s suspicions. The sun was about to set ; Francis, yielding to the charm peculiar to that hour of the day, was indulging with expansive gayety the facile poesy of his age. He was composing, as he went along, a sort of ballad in the style of chivalry, in which each of the personages of the expedition had his part. Hervé could not help smiling at the epic improvization of his friend, and at the character, at once heroic and burlesque, that was attributed to himself.

Stopping suddenly at the name of the daughter of the MacGregors, as he called the Scottish maid :

“Do you know,” said Francis, “that she seems the most discreet maid and the best-veiled Scotchwoman it is

possible to see? I regret to say, major, that I found no resemblance whatever between her and the red-headed caricature you gave me as her portrait."

"I told you, Francis, that I had never seen her; and if she continues to travel with as much modesty, I never shall."

"I have been more lucky," said Francis. "A trick of the wind betrayed to me a graceful contour and a double battery of pearls of the finest water. As to the style of her figure and the shape of her hands, you may judge for yourself."

"It seems to me, sir knight," said Hervé, laughing, "that this is a matter for our squires."

At this moment their conversation was suddenly interrupted by a number of exclamations starting rapidly all along the column. It was now quite night, but bright and clear; they had reached the brow of a hilly moor, and had begun descending its declivity; the bottom of the narrow valley before them disappeared half in the darkness and half beneath a cloud of white mist rising from the marshes. Some half a league ahead, the vague outline of a hill could be seen emerging from the fog, and farther still, standing clearly against the sky, the dark and jagged mass of a feudal ruin. On the face of an isolated wall two ogival windows, filled with the pale light of the moon, whose disk was invisible as yet, shone forth with fantastic effulgence. Hervé and Francis had halted first in presence of that apparition. The women, yielding to a vague feeling of terror, had closed their ranks and drawn nearer to the two officers. Turning towards the Scotch girl, who had at last partially lifted her veil:

"There's a landscape that must remind you of those of

your own country," said Major Hervé. The girl bowed without speaking.

"Brother," asked Andrée, "are we really to spend the night in that horrible spot yonder?"

"You know, dear," said Hervé, "that I have had no hand in arranging your itinerary: you must take honest Kado to task if your sleeping-room does not prove to your taste."

"I shall die of fright in there, I assure you," rejoined Andrée.

"I trust," said the canoness in the sharp and solemn tone that distinguished her elocution, "I trust that Mademoiselle de Pelven will be promptly reconciled to that old chateau when she hears that it was built by her own brave ancestors, and that it is the most ancient patrimony of her family."

"Many thanks!" exclaimed Andrée. "That's worse yet. My brave ancestors, madame? Well, the granddaughter of my brave ancestors is a coward, that's all. Mon Dieu! and I, who have all their portraits in my head! I am sure I shall see them all marching along, one behind the other, from Oliver the Big-footed down to Geoffrey with the Twisted Beard."

"And suppose you should see them, my dear," interrupted a voice whose singularly sweet and grave tone suddenly accelerated the throbbings of Hervé's heart, "what could you fear from them? You are their loyal descendant; you have preserved the honor of their name, and fidelity to their faith. You are not the one, Andrée, who should dread meeting face to face those who live and died for their king and for their God!"

The young republican officer had felt the blood rising to his face.

"If I know the history of my family," he said, not without some emotion, "more than one, among those to whom Mademoiselle de Kergant refers, died fighting against the king and for his country: in those days Brittany was a Breton's country; to-day France is!"

After speaking these words, Hervé urged his horse forward in the rugged path that wound down the hill-side; Francis, after having issued the orders for resuming the march, overtook his friend.

"You were right, major," he said, "she is no ordinary woman; her voice has I know not what penetrating sonority that captivates the soul. I wonder that you were able to answer her; I would have run away."

"She hates me," murmured Pelven, "she hates me; and what is worse, she despises me."

"That she does not love you, Major Hervé, may be so, though the reverse is quite as possible; but. . . . Well! well, what's the matter with our guide now? There he is making signs of the cross as vigorously as he can."

"Some Breton superstition," said Hervé; and walking up to the guide, he thought he heard him muttering some prayers, and he saw him raising piously to his lips the medals attached to a huge string of beads.

Suprised at this sudden fit of devotion, the young man laid his hand gently on the shoulder of the guide, who shuddered.

"Excuse me, my good friend," said Pelven, "but this path is a hard one to travel, and we need all your zeal. The moment is poorly selected to indulge in prayer."

"It does not become the son of those who sleep yonder," gravely replied the Breton, extending his hand in the direction of the ruins, "to say that there is no need

of prayer when we are about descending into the Valley of Groach."

"You know, Kado, that I have never lived in this part of the country : I am absolutely ignorant of the mysteries of this valley, whose name I now hear for the first time. I wish to know whether it offers any particular danger that you think proper of conjuring."

"This valley is haunted!" said Kado, dropping his voice and lifting his beads to his lips.

"Haunted! what means that, major?" said Francis, who had come up just in time to catch the guide's last words.

"That means, my dear lieutenant, that Old Nick, otherwise called the d—l, holds plenary court in this valley, and that you are probably going to see, sporting in the moonlight, *Groachs* and Korandons, which are the local names for witches and fairies."

"Good!" replied Francis, laughing. "We'll have some fun, then; we'll . . ."

A gesture and an exclamation from the game-keeper, who had suddenly stopped, interrupted the young man. The little caravan was then about two-thirds of the way down the hill, and still continued to follow slowly the tortuous and precipitous path, which had now become a succession of mere rocky steps. Notwithstanding their confidence in their horses, who, like all the horses of mountainous regions, were as sure-footed as the mules of the Spanish Sierras, the women and the soldiers themselves, giving their entire attention to the difficulties of the road, kept profound silence. The exclamation of the guide and the conversation that followed could therefore be heard and commented upon up to the very last ranks of the column.

Kado had stopped with uplifted arm and outstretched neck, in the attitude of a man who is waiting until his ears can confirm some grave occurrence.

"What is the matter?" said Hervé cautiously.

"I was mistaken," replied Kado, "and I thank Heaven for it; for though I have never seen anything of the kind with my own eyes . . ."

The guide interrupted himself abruptly, and shuddering in all his limbs as if laboring under a powerful terror:

"No, no!" he added, "I was not mistaken; listen, master."

Pelven and all those who followed him stopped to listen. They then heard distinctly the sound of dull and regular thuds, somewhat similar to that of a hammer striking a wooden anvil. The blows ceased at intervals, and then began again with the same force. Similar sounds seemed to arise at once from several points of the valley.

"What the deuce is that noise?" said Francis. "It sounds like washerwomen pounding clothes." *

"Yes," replied the game-keeper in a sad and grave tone, "they are pounding the clothes of the dead." At the same time he bared his head, raised his eyes to heaven, and began reciting a prayer in a low voice.

Hervé found himself painfully embarrassed; he felt the necessity of cutting short this scene, which might have a contagious effect upon the minds of the women and even upon the intelligence of some of his soldiers; but he

* The reader is probably aware that the popular American wash-board is not in use in France, and that, in lieu thereof, clothes are pounded, upon stones or other smooth surfaces, with broad wooden beetles, which, it is said, wears them out much less.—(TRANS.)

felt great repugnance to using violent means towards the old family servant. In the midst of his irresolution he felt his arm lightly pressed: "Brother," murmured Andrée's caressing voice, "you are going to scold me, but I am terribly frightened. They are night-laundresses, don't you think so?"

"Silly child!" replied Hervé, laughing; then leaning towards the game-keeper's ear: "My good Kado," he said in a whisper, "march on, I beg of you; don't frighten my sister."

Kado glanced for a moment at the young man as if undecided, and drew a long breath; after which he resumed his march, twisting his beads in his fingers. Hervé then turning towards the soldiers:

"Boys!" he exclaimed gayly, "it seems that there are some *ci-devant* laundresses down below; but you know that the Republic does not recognize them; so then, forward!"

"Major," rejoined Bruidoux, "here is Colibri, who has some work for them with his dozen silk stockings."

The laugh that greeted the sergeant's jest reassured Hervé as to the moral condition of his troop, and he resumed his place by the side of Francis with an easier mind.

Meantime, as they were approaching the foot of the hill, the strange sounds that arose from the lonely valley became more and more distinct, imitating to perfection the peculiar noise of a beetle over wet clothes, and sometimes also the sharp ring of the wood striking on the stone.

"May I inquire, major," said Francis, "just what sort of animal they call a laundress, in conjuror's style?"

"Laundresses, lieutenant, are female devils who make it a business of washing shrouds in the dead of night.

It is further said that they request those they meet to help them wringing these clothes, and that in this case the only means of safety is to wring in the same direction with them; if you wring the other way, you are gone."

"Ah!" said Francis. "Thanks for the advice, major. I should like to know, now, to what cause you attribute, in your own mind, the ridiculous music that is afflicting our ears; for here is the fog lifting, the moon casts a bright light over the valley, and I really don't see the first sign of a dwelling."

"True; but there is a part of the valley we cannot see on account of this big rock. A little shepherd striking with a stick on the stones in the path would be enough to produce all this noise."

"Ma foi, I hardly believe it, unless you suppose at least a dozen little shepherds with a dozen big sticks."

"This valley must have an echo that repeats the sound of the horses' hoofs on the rocks; I have heard, twenty times, echoes as . . ."

"Upon my soul!" exclaimed Francis. "Laundresses or devils, there they are!"

The two officers had then reached the other side of the rock which had heretofore concealed from them a part of the valley. Hervé cast his eyes in the direction indicated by Francis, and discovered with utmost surprise, at a distance of a few hundred paces, a group of women dressed in white, some kneeling before pools of water, others apparently engaged spreading linen over tufts of swampy grass. A few smothered exclamations and some confused murmurs informed Hervé at the same time that the women and the soldiers had just discovered this strange sight.

"I say! Colibri," said Bruidoux, "now is the time to take your silk stockings out of your trunk."

"Hervé!" exclaimed Andrée, throwing her arms around her brother's waist, "what is this, in the name of Heaven?"

"They are *chouans*,* my darling. I had been warned that I would find some of these gentlemen here. Stay there, and fear nothing."

As he uttered this pious story, the object of which was to substitute the apprehension of a known danger to the hallucination that disturbed his sister's mind, Hervé fancied that he saw the canoness making a violent gesture of surprise, and fixing upon him a penetrating look. That look aroused anew all his forgotten suspicions; he leaned toward Francis and spoke rapidly to him: "See, the canoness is manifesting no uneasiness whatever; it must be some trick."

"I prefer that!" rejoined the youth, uttering a sigh of relief. "Shall we charge, major?"

The two young men, turning again then with curiosity towards the valley, saw that the laundresses were going on with their work without apparent concern for the presence of the republican detachment. The attitude of the soldiers was becoming uneasy.

"This has already lasted too long!" murmured Hervé. "Come, boys," he added aloud, "we are going to make them pack up their clothes. Load your guns. Ladies, and you too, Kado, please stay behind this rock."

The steel ramrods were heard ringing in the gun-barrels. Then the two officers, having formed their men in a

* *Chouans*.—The name given to the irregular Vendean and Breton soldiers; sort of guerrillas.—(TRANS.)

solid platoon, began advancing over the damp soil of the valley. They had come within some forty paces of the women, when suddenly the fantastic troupe left off their work, formed a ring, and began dancing wildly, singing at the same time a sort of dull incantation, like the hum of a swarm of bees. Hervé ordered a halt.

“Hallo! yonder,” he shouted, “who goes there?” And after waiting for a moment: “I warn you, whoever you may be,” he added, “that I am not going to expose my men in such a silly affair as this. Surrender or we’ll fire. Take aim, boys.”

“Look out for the water,” murmured Bruidoux.

The laundresses, meantime, were going on with their dance and their mysterious chant.

“Attention! Fire!” said Hervé.

As soon as the smoke had somewhat cleared and the soldiers had ascertained the effect of the discharge, the liveliest hilarity broke forth in the ranks: all the performers in the fantastic ballet could be seen lying at full length and motionless on the ground.

“That’ll teach them,” said Bruidoux, “to dance improper dances by moonlight.”

Hervé, however, feeling some distrust at such a complete result, ordered the grenadiers to reload their arms and to keep up their order of battle; after which the detachment resumed its march, with the young officers at its head. They had not gone ten steps when suddenly the white forms that were lying pell-mell on the soil rose all at once, and started at a run across the plain, jumping and scampering with much vitality.

“Forward, boys!” shouted Hervé. “After them, and each man for himself. Come, Francis, forward with me!”

At the same time, he drove his spurs into his horse's sides, and sprang forward, side by side with the young lieutenant, on the tracks of the fugitives. Unfortunately the soil of the valley was marshy, and the horses' feet sank at every step in quagmires which the white phantoms had sufficient instinct or knowledge of the ground to avoid. The grenadiers rushed in disorder after their chiefs; and their oft-interrupted course, to which was mingled a concert of shouts, cries, oaths, and laughter, added a fresh scene of witchery to all those of which the haunted valley might have formerly been the theatre.

The troop of laundresses, having reached, half running, dancing, the extremity of the valley, began climbing the half slope at the top of which rose the great feudal ruins. Hervé and Francis made renewed efforts, and had at last the gratification of hearing their horses' feet striking upon the firmer soil of the hill. Pelven was a few steps in advance of his friend.

"Major," exclaimed Francis, "wait for me! And seeing that Hervé was going ahead, unmindful of his appeals: "Take care," he added; "there may be a hundred of the rascals up there!"

"Were there a hundred thousand of them, and the *grand chouan* himself at their head," replied Hervé, besides himself with anger, "by all the devils, I am bound to kill at least one!"

At the same moment, the young officer reached the summit of the acclivity, and seeing the laundresses within pistol-shot, he uttered a cry of triumph: upon the level surface of the plateau the advantage seemed decidedly in favor of the horsemen. The fugitives, feeling themselves closely pressed, made a *détour* towards the right, and ran

as fast as they could in the direction of the ruins ; but Francis, anticipating such a manœuvre, had, while climbing the hill, gained considerable ground in the same direction, and Pelven saw him appear suddenly two hundred steps from him, galloping so as to cut off the laundresses, who thus found themselves caught between the two officers. Hervé saw them pass behind an isolated fragment of wall that rose from amid the débris of an outer postern ; but to his great surprise, though a large vacant space divided this wall from the castle, he did not see them reappear on the other side. Francis experienced the same astonishment.

“ They must be behind this wall ! ” he shouted.

A few moments later, both, having urged their horses over the heaps of rubbish, came to land, one on each side of the isolated wall. They were able then to see both faces of it at once, and to satisfy themselves that every trace of the laundresses had disappeared. The two young men alighted at once, knelt on the ground, and began examining the place, removing some of the rubbish, and striking the soil with the handles of their swords ; but whether the night, which had grown darker, foiled their search, or whether they were wrong in attributing to the natural order of things the causes of that disappearance, they discovered nothing that could humanly explain the mortifying issue of their pursuit.

III.

“My lord, I’ve been slapped.”—MOLIERE, *Le Sicilien*.

“THIS is a comedy,” said Hervé rising to his feet, “which I shall long regret having been unable to convert into a tragedy.”

“But I hope, major, that we are going to turn up this ground until we discover the hiding-place.”

“Such is not my intention: first of all, we have not the necessary tools; and then I don’t fancy having my grenadiers shot down one by one through some cellar vent, nor exposing ourselves to a fresh disappointment, if, as I suppose, the fellows have other outlets through which to escape. We must simply keep a sharp look-out to-night so as to hold the witches in their cave until morning.”

“As you please, major; but the canoness is going to have a terrible laugh at us.”

“Let her laugh! We’ll laugh in our turn too, at the proper time. Silence! I hear our men.”

The soldiers were indeed coming up, mud-stained and out of breath; they uttered joyful exclamations when they discovered their officers, and they crowded around them with eager curiosity. Hervé took upon himself to tell them that the *chouans* had had time to go down the other side of the hill before he had reached the plateau; he even went so far as to point out a small grove of pine-trees in which, he said, he had thought it

useless to pursue them. These explanations were, however, beginning to embarrass him, when he was relieved by the arrival of the women and of the guide.

Andrée alighted and came to them herself, trembling on the arm of her brother, who repeated to her briefly the fable to which he had just treated the grenadiers. Then, having left a sentry at the foot of the wall, under pretext of having the pine-grove watched, he took his sister's arm and directed his steps towards the chateau, followed by the whole escort.

"My dear child," said Hervé to his sister, availing himself of a moment when the canoness could not hear him, "do you still feel in your heart some interest for me?"

"Some interest, Hervé? Mon Dieu, is it of interest that two poor orphans like us should speak? Say rather affection, the deepest and tenderest affection."

"Thank you, dear Andrée; you have removed a painful impression from my mind."

"What impression?"

"The impression that my sister could be the accomplice of some undertaking against my honor as a man and a soldier."

"Your honor, Hervé? that is a word upon the meaning of which I fear we may not quite agree."

"I will explain to you, then, how I understand it," rejoined Hervé sternly. "My honor consists in serving these colors unto death; and I must tell you, Andrée, that any project that might have for its object to make me fail in that duty, would inevitably turn to the confusion, the regret, and the sorrow of those who should have conceived it."

"In the name of Heaven, brother," said Andrée, looking at Hervé with that surprised and candid expression which, even in the youngest of women, is often but shrewd deceit, "what suspicion have you against me?"

"Against you in particular, none; but the scene that has just taken place has not been, I am afraid, as inexplicable to the other ladies as to you; I fear that it may prove but the prelude of other and less innocent juggleries, and that is why I tell you, in order that you may repeat it, that I am incapable of ever preferring life to the honor of dying with my soldiers."

On hearing these words, which revealed to her the nature of Hervé's apprehensions, Andrée unconsciously uttered a sigh of relief:

"Thank God!" she exclaimed eagerly, "I am very sure that neither yourself nor your men are any more in danger than ourselves." And approaching her lips to her brother's cheek: "You know very well besides," she added in a tone of mystery, "that there are at least two of us here who place no slight value on your life, major!"

Leaving that drop of opium in the ear of the suspicious young officer, Mademoiselle de Pelven started off and disappeared through the vestibule of the deserted manor-house.

The vast and irregular edifice which the country people called the Castle of Groach bore the stamp of the various periods through which it had passed since its foundation. The main bulk of the ruins, the tall donjon still standing, and the remnants of a crenellated enclosure retained the imposing character of a mediæval fortress. Some of the lower constructions offered the

indications of an architectural period still more remote, whilst the building with pointed gables, that formed the opposite wing from the donjon, seemed to date scarcely farther back than the later Valois. This part of the edifice was still provided with windows and balconies.

It was in that pavilion that Mademoiselle de Pelven overtook Bellah and the canoness. In the two rooms which were found in the best order preparations were made for the night, and camp-beds, which had been provided in advance by Kado, erected for the ladies. After partaking in silence of some provisions purchased at the last village, Andrée and Bellah retired to the room they were to occupy jointly, leaving the canoness to share hers with Alix, whilst the Scotch girl took possession of a small oratory contrived in one of the towers.

When Bellah and Andrée found themselves alone in their vast room, dimly lighted by a lamp, they instinctively dropped upon their knees, and prayed for some time in silence. Andrée rose first, and going up to a window, she seemed to consider with interest what was going on within the grounds of the old chateau. The soldiers had kindled fires here and there, and the vacillating flames shone at intervals through the ogives and the mutilated arches: each one was preparing as best he could for the night. On the lawn, in front of the manor, Major Hervé was walking alone, doubtless busy turning over in his head the last words of his sister, with that restless puerility which is characteristic of lovers. Suddenly he stopped and looked up at the window whence Andrée was observing him. The girl threw herself quickly back and began pacing the room excitedly, while crushing her handkerchief between her

fingers. Bellah had just left her pious attitude, and noticing the unusual animation that colored Andrée's face:

"What is it, sister?" she asked anxiously.

For all answer, Andrée pushed back the hand that was trying to clasp hers, and went on walking rapidly and torturing her little handkerchief.

"What does this mean?" said Bellah. "Are we angry,—and if so, what about?"

"Listen," said Andrée, suddenly stopping in front of her; "it cannot go on in this way. I shall not sleep to-night nor any other night; I shall never sleep again."

"What! are you frightened to that extent? But come, darling, I am with you; your valiant ancestors are not thinking of disturbing us; besides, we have a light and you know that ghosts . . ."

"Eh! what do I care for ghosts!" rejoined Andrée, snapping her fingers; "what do I care for my ancestors! I wish I had never had any!"

At this sharp answer, Mlle. de Kergant raised her lovely eyes to heaven and replied: "But, then, what keeps you from going to sleep, and allowing me to go to sleep myself, mademoiselle?"

"I don't know," said Andrée.

Mlle. de Kergant sighed, made a gesture of delicate compassion, and replied gently at last: "Neither do I, my dear."

"Your aunt is an old dragon!" exclaimed Andrée forcibly.

"Sister!"

"And you are another yourself, Bellah."

"Very well!" quietly said Mlle. de Kergant, addressing for the second time to heaven a look worthy of it.

Andrée lost all patience.

"The idea did not come to you," she exclaimed, "of asking my brother to take supper with his sister! No, you left him at the door like a dog. My poor brother, how we are deceiving him. And there's how you treat him besides. I had expected it of your aunt; but you, you who knew how much Hervé . . . "

The capricious child seemed to hesitate about finishing a sentence the explosion of which her elder sister's gentle and proud gaze seemed at once to conjure and to scorn.

"I know," said Bellah, "that Major Hervé is my dearest friend's brother, and it is because I know it that I have been able to control my feelings so far as to treat merely as a stranger, I, a noble and Christian woman, one whom I know as an apostate and a gentleman who has forfeited his good name."

"Is it so!" exclaimed Andrée. "Well, as true as you have just obliterated with two words ten years of affection, the apostate and the felon will hear this moment what service you expect of him. He will at least know that he is not the only traitor here. Let me pass!"

"Andrée," said Mlle. de Kergaut, "you will not do that."

"I will do it!" replied Andrée, whose close-drawn lips announced a firm determination. "You have made me blush for my brother; I mean that you shall blush before him."

Bellah grasped Andrée's dress with supplicating terror and almost falling on her knees before her:

"On the name of your family," she said, "on the salvation of your soul, stay! dearest Andrée."

"No, no; you have been without mercy; I'll be the

same!" rejoined the girl, stamping the floor with a sort of wild excitement. "Let me go!"

At the same time she ran towards the door. Bellah drew herself up and stood motionless; her features had assumed the hue of a tumular marble, but her fiery soul betrayed itself by the flashes of her eyes and in her quivering nostrils; she held up with a royal gesture the forefinger of her right hand, and speaking with exalted solemnity:

"Andrée de Pelven," she said, "is this the hospitality you give beneath your forefathers' roof?" Thanks to you, this spot will hereafter be truly accursed; but since this is serious, since this misfortune must happen, stand aside yourself. "I shall spare your lips the shame of a betrayal, and you'll see whether I blush when calling martyrdom upon my own head."

The young enthusiast, with still quivering lips, walked with dignity towards the door, against which Andrée was leaning with fixed eyes and trembling limbs. At the moment when Bellah laid her hand upon her to draw her aside the poor child ceased to tremble; her graceful features became overspread with deadly pallor; her eyes closed, and she sank slowly to the ground. Bellah dropped on her knees, received her friend's head in her arms, and covering with kisses the head and brow of the frail creature:

"Holy Virgin Mary!" she said, "what have I done? Andrée, sister! Mon Dieu, forgive her, help her." Poor darling! 'Tis I, Andrée; nothing has happened!— She don't know where she is How could I get angry at her? Come, speak to me. "I'll do whatever you please, but do speak to me, dear little sister!"

Andrée was coming slowly back to life under this shower of caresses ; she opened her eyes, smiled as a child who wakes up, and resting a finger against her cheek :

“ Confess,” she said, “ that you love him a little.”

“ She must be dreaming still,” said Bellah. “ Come, do you feel better ? ”

“ I feel better if you love him, I feel worse if you don’t,” rejoined Andrée.

“ Mon Dieu ! Mon Dieu ! ”

“ Thy God shall be his God, thy law his law, whenever thou wishest.” Then rising quickly to her feet and throwing her arms around Bellah’s neck : “ Listen,” Andrée went on, “ I don’t ask you to shout to him through the window, ‘ Major, I adore you ! ’ But you owe him some slight compensation after all his troubles. “ You must give him something. Come, what shall it be ? ”

“ Nothing, indeed.”

“ Ah ! I have it,” rejoined the girl, snatching off dexterously the white feather from Bellah’s hat ; “ what a triumph, my dear, to compel a republican officer to wear the King’s colors.”

This ingenious compromise was not much to Mademoiselle de Kergant’s liking ; she sprang forward to recapture the plume of which her adopted sister was preparing to make such a treacherous use ; but Andrée, generally quicker in her motions than her friend, had already opened the window, and Bellah only arrived in time to lend by her presence a more precious meaning to the light token that was fluttering down over Major Hervé’s head. Andrée burst out laughing and Mlle. de Kergant withdrew precipitately from the window, shrugging her shoulders with an air of mingled spite and dignity.

Nevertheless it might have been thought that the charming projectile lying at the feet of Major Hervé was possessed of some magic property; for the young man, since he had come in almost imperceptible contact with it, seemed to have taken root on the spot where that event had interrupted his walk.

He felt that they must be watching him from the window, and he remained in positive anxiety, his eyes fixed upon the mysterious plume, without daring to take it up, and still less to overlook it. If he took it up lovingly, how ridiculous he might appear, supposing that chance alone or some childish prank of Andree's had directed the feather's flight? If, on the contrary, he walked away carelessly from it, did he not risk offending seriously the very one from whom he hoped at least that this discreet message might have come? Between these two fatal apprehensions, Hervé determined to adopt a medium course.

He picked up the little feather with the tip of his fingers, not with the manner of an anxious lover, but like a man who finds something and whose curiosity is aroused. He then resumed his walk, while examining the object with a sort of careless naïveté, as if he were saying:

“Why, that's an ostrich feather! Where the deuce can an ostrich feather have fallen from in this part of the world?” But as soon as the young man found himself, shielded from all curious eyes, behind the angle of the building, his manner changed: he raised eagerly the feather to his lips; then smiling at his own weakness, he undid the fastenings of his coat, folded up the plume carefully, and transferred it immediately, in form as well as in spirit, to the condition of a relic.

After having thus duly disposed of his treasure, Major Hervé prepared to enter the vestibule of the manor, where Francis had sought shelter against the cool of the night. At the moment of crossing the threshold, the young major, prompted by prudence, turned to cast one more glance at the isolated fragment of wall at the foot of which his pursuit of the laundresses had terminated in so enigmatic a manner. Hervé had selected in person the soldier who had just relieved the first sentry at this important post: it was a young grenadier, called Robert, whose courage and intelligence were personally known to him. He did not see him, but at the place where his eyes were seeking him, he saw, above the heap of rubbish, a piece of white linen that appeared to be shaken to attract his attention.

Hervé hastened to walk down the stoop again, and directed his steps rapidly though carefully towards the postern, and five seconds later he stood face to face with the soldier.

"Well, Robert," he said in a whisper, after satisfying himself that they were entirely alone, "what is the matter?"

"The matter, major," replied the soldier, speaking in a half frightened and half amused tone, "the matter is, that it rests with us to catch the magpie on her nest, the king on his throne, and the courtiers and the whole *ci-devant* concern. They want to make you swallow as big as a cathedral, and as long as from here to China. You have been betrayed."

"Betrayed? How! By whom? Speak quick!" exclaimed Hervé.

"Not so loud, major, not so loud! This is the story: I was walking along quietly, keeping a sharp look-out

according to orders, on the pine-grove ; suddenly, what do I hear ? behind me or beneath me, I couldn't tell exactly which : a great clatter of voices, like many people speaking and discussing. As I always like to get all the information I can, I hurried round and hunted, until at last I hit the desired spot, and then . . . ”

The soldier stopped short, and remained with gaping mouth, making a gesture of supreme terror ; then Hervé saw the unfortunate young man leap back and sink heavily upon the soil. At the same time, he heard close to his ears the report of a fire-arm, and receiving a violent blow on the head, he fell senseless himself a few steps from the grenadier.

A man of athletic stature—the one who had just committed this double act of violence with such cruel success—left the foot of the wall, from which he seemed to have issued, and cast a curious look over the chateau. In the meantime, an individual of more frail appearance was leaning over the inanimate body of the republican officer, and feeling his head with apparent concern.

“There is no harm done, I believe,” he said in a voice whose tone was remarkably pleasant and harmonious.

“The shot has aroused them from their sleep,” said the other ; “they are all going to run this way, and we'll have a good chance on the other side.”

As he uttered these words, he followed his companion through a wide aperture managed at the base of the wall, which closed at once behind him, so as to leave no trace whatever of his passage.

IV.

“Comment vous nommez-vous?—J’ai nom Eliacin.”—RACINE, *Athalie*.

At the sound of the explosion, all the soldiers, guided by Francis, had rushed in disorder towards the spot whence the signal of alarm seemed to have come. The young lieutenant uttered a painful groan at the sight of his friend’s body lying motionless on the ground; but his grief subsided when he was able to ascertain, by the light of a torch, that there was no sign of a wound on his person.

“The hand that struck that blow,” said Bruidoux gravely, as he picked up the major’s hat, which bore the marks of a terrible pressure, “the fist, I say, that prepared this omelet is not fastened to a young lady’s arm.”

“We must still thank the wretch, whoever he may be,” replied Francis, “for he has at least avoided the shedding of blood.”

“My opinion is, on the contrary, lieutenant, that he has shed at least a good pitcher-full of it. I did not know what that was under my feet, but . . . ”

“Woe to me!” exclaimed Francis, dropping upon his knees again by Hervé’s body; “I cannot have looked well; this would seem to indicate a horrible wound.”

“Horrible indeed,” said Bruidoux in a grave and sorrowful tone which was not habitual to him; “but you are not looking for it where it is, lieutenant. Here is

the victim, and I fear he has done picket duty for the last time."

While speaking, the sergeant, with the help of the soldiers, was trying to lift up Robert's body, which a heap of rubbish had prevented them from discovering sooner.

"Dead? Are you sure he is dead, old Bruidoux? is there really nothing to be done?"

"Nothing, unless it be a *ci-devant* prayer, citizen lieutenant. The ball, like a true aristocrat, has selected the best place, and lodged in the heart. It is a pity," Bruidoux went on, addressing the soldiers who surrounded him, "it is a pity that a leaden nut, shot by some cowardly wretch, should so easily penetrate the breast of a brave man. Poor fellow! I was fond of him, my boys. He had not in him, any more than I have, the stuff of a general-in-chief; but around the camp-kettle as well as in front of the enemy, it was pleasant to feel his elbow at your side. He was a companion of irreproachable conduct. . . . Hem, hem! citizens, a tear may fall upon a gray mustache without disgracing it, when we are bidding farewell to a friend. . . . Poor Robert! citizens . . . he has started on his long journey!"

In the meantime, Francis had succeeded in bringing his friend to life; but Hervé's weakness prevented him as yet from answering the young lieutenant's eager questions. Some of the soldiers, acting under Bruidoux's directions, began digging with their sabres a grave, in which they laid the remains of their unfortunate comrade. Others, forming with their muskets a sort of stretcher, prepared to carry their commander to the

chateau. They had gone about two-thirds of the way when the near report of a fresh explosion stopped them short. Hervé made an effort to rise, but fell back at once, exhausted. Francis, leaving the two grenadiers with him, started with the rest of the troop in the direction of the donjon behind which the shot seemed to have been fired.

The sentry placed at this corner of the ruins was found at his post, engaged in reloading his gun. Questioned by Francis on the motives of the alarm, he replied that he had seen a procession of black and white phantoms suddenly spring from the base of the escarpment on which the donjon rested on that side; that after hailing them without receiving any answer, he had fired. The soldier added, with a slight emotion in his voice, that they had disappeared at once, as if the earth had closed over them. A heavy fog, rising from a small river that flowed at the foot of the donjon, explained more naturally to Francis the fresh disappearance of their ubiquitous enemy. He could not suppress a gesture of anger, and, recommending increased vigilance to the sentry, he returned to join Pelven, who, having fully recovered from the effect of the blow, was himself coming to meet him. The two young men, after having each communicated to the other the events of which he had been the witness, gave permission to the men to resume their interrupted rest.

"I have no doubt," said Hervé, as soon as he was alone with his friend, "that all this has happened unknown to my sister; for she was apprising me this very evening, that, to her certain knowledge, we were running no danger whatever, and I know that she is incapa-

ble of uttering a falsehood. What seems most probable to me is, that we have disturbed a band of *chouans* in their retreat; and unfortunately we cannot think of pursuing them through this fog. But, really, my head is aching more than I like. I greatly need rest, and I am going to lie down here. Try and go to sleep yourself."

The two young men parted after having agreed to leave the women, and especially Andrée, in ignorance of the events of the night, in order to spare anxiety to some, and not to give to the others any pretext for a secret triumph.

Some three hours after the conclusion of this episode, the soldiers were all up, stretching their benumbed limbs in the bright sunshine. The game-keeper was busy saddling the horses with his usual gravity, while Hervé and Francis, standing some distance aside, seemed engaged in an animated discussion. Sergeant Bruidoux, having removed his pipe from his mouth, modestly approached the two officers, and raising his hand to his hat:

"Hail and fraternity, citizens!" he said. "You look fresh as an apple this morning, major. I see with delight that last night's number one blow had no more moral effect on your complexion than a maiden's caress. . . . And is it your opinion, citizens, that we should leave the old shanty before making a close survey of the *ci-devant* boudoir of the fair laundresses?"

"That's exactly what I was telling the lieutenant," replied Hervé. "Though there is every reason to believe that the rascals have cleared out, it would be well to examine their den. The slightest thing may reveal to us the object of their meeting."

“Very well!” exclaimed Francis. “Who objects? But let us go all together. It is not right that you should run alone the risk of being caught in some trap.”

“And where the devil do you see any trap?” rejoined Hervé. “Didn’t I show you at the base of the donjon the door through which they escaped? They left it wide open. If it is a trap, it is rather a thin one. Light a torch, Bruidoux. I do not mean, lieutenant, that a single one of our men should risk a hair in this affair. It is enough, it is too much, that I should already have to reproach myself with Robert’s death.”

“Allow me,” said Bruidoux, who was returning with a lighted torch in his hand, two others under his arm, “allow me to settle the matter for you. Let us go, all three of us; if there be any ladies, well! they will only have the more cause to rejoice.”

Hervé, notwithstanding his earnest desire of visiting alone the suspicious cave, consented to this arrangement, lest a more persistent refusal should excite the loyal sergeant’s suspicions. They all three began then crawling down the side of the steep bluff that formed the base of the donjon, and about half way down they found the small door which Major Hervé had discovered from above, and which was contrived so as not to be easily seen from the plain below. This door gave admission to a sort of dark and narrow tunnel, into which they penetrated, each with his torch in his hand. After a few steps, this passage led them into a vaulted hall, to which perfectly preserved arches imparted a character of sombre architectural elegance. Torches still lay smoking on the damp soil: it was, however, the only evidence of the recent sojourn of living beings in this retreat. Semi-circular

doors led into smaller rooms, through which the two young men and the sergeant continued their investigations. In the angle of one of these, Hervé discovered, by the red light of his torch, the lower step of a winding staircase that seemed to ascend through the vault. He ran up these steps eagerly, but at the height of the vault he found a breach in the stairs which he could not clear. A close examination of the débris satisfied him beyond a doubt that this breach had been effected during the night, and his suspicions against the politic canoness, to whose apartment these steps evidently led, were further strengthened by this discovery.

Hervé overtook the young aid-de-camp in a distant part of the cellar where he had just laid hand upon a huge bolt that closed a sort of low and broad door, contrived in the wall and reached by a steep earthen embankment. By means of their united efforts, the two young men succeeded in drawing the bolt, when the door fell at once like a drawbridge, and the light, flooding the interior of the cellar, revealed that chance had led them to the mysterious opening which had so opportunely sheltered the laundresses the night before, and which had given passage to Robert's murderer. The door was formed of stout oak planks, lined inside with sheet-iron, and covered outside with a light coating of mortar that fitted closely into the rest of the wall. They were about leaving the cave through this aperture, when they heard loud shouts behind them, and Bruidou appeared, leading triumphantly by the ear a captive of an unexpected kind.

It was a boy of some ten years of age, with blue eyes and pleasant features ; his black hair, cut square over his forehead, hung loose behind over his shoulders ; he wore

a long brown woollen jacket and wide breeches. At the first glance, Hervé recognized him, and cast at once upon Kado a glance of mingled reproach and pity, to which the guide replied by an imperceptible gesture of grief. At the same time, the ladies, who had come forward attracted by the sergeant's cries, exchanged stealthily looks of timid confusion.

"Imagine, major," said Bruidoux, "that this double son of a laundress was sleeping like a dormouse on a heap of straw. His mamma must have forgotten him in the brawl. I addressed him, by gestures and otherwise, two or three polite questions, but the little rascal seems unacquainted with the habits of good society, and he is as dumb as a fish."

Any doubts which Hervé might still have retained, as to the duplicity that was used towards him, had completely vanished at the sight of the captive boy's well-known features; but the young officer, deeply moved by the anguish that appeared upon Kado's pale and contracted lips, hesitated to make use of his advantage.

"My little friend," he said to the child, "you must tell us the truth, or else even your age will not shield you from severe punishment. You have spent the night with people whom we have more than one reason to consider as our enemies."

"I should think so!" murmured Bruidoux; "were it only the *ci-devant* blow."

"Silence! sergeant," said Hervé. "Come, boy, who brought you here?"

"It was the Groachs," said the child; "the Groachs of the valley."

"The Groachs!" interrupted Bruidoux; "I'll give you

some Groach, directly ! Was it a Groach, too, that pulled the trigger ? . . . ”

“ Citizen sergeant ! ” said Hervé sharply, “ that’s enough. We will only waste time questioning him ; you may search him, however. That child belongs to the law ; it has stricken younger heads, though I grieve to recall it ; but that’s what the heartless people who have sacrificed this poor creature should have thought of.”

“ Yes, yes ! ” said the boy, laughing, “ go ahead ! the fairy’ll manage to save me. *Entre-nous*, gentlemen, I’ll tell you that she is my wife.”

“ And here is probably her wedding-present,” rejoined Bruidoux, taking from the young prisoner’s pocket a top with its string. “ You would have done better, my boy, to be content with this game, which, as you all know, citizens, is not a potentate’s pastime, but simply an honest and democratic recreation.”

In the meantime, the ladies had mounted their horses ; Kado having approached to hold his stirrup for Major Hervé, the latter leaned towards the Breton’s ear, and whispered to him :

“ You are severely punished, Kado, for having tried to deceive me, and I am punished myself for having believed in your good faith.”

“ Yes, sir ; yes, it is a hard trial ; it might have been harder, had you wished to make it so, I know. You have had pity on the child. Are you going to take the poor little boy along ? ”

“ Were I to do my duty, Kado, I should take both father and son.”

“ The child is very weak, my master. I love to look at him, for his mother’s sake. They say Alix looks like me,

but the little one is the living image of his mother. He is very weak, sir, and if he is to go to prison, or else . . .”

The game-keeper interrupted himself as if suffocated by the violence of his emotion.

“Master Kado,” replied Hervé, “I have already yielded but too much to old feelings for which there seems to be but little regard on your side. Can you and will you tell me, aloud and in the presence of these men, what is going on and what they are plotting?”

The Breton, after casting around him a look of painful hesitation, raised one hand towards heaven, and said in a firm tone :

“The child is in the hands of God !”

“Fall in and march !” exclaimed Hervé. “Sergeant, I place the boy in your keeping ; you will be responsible for him to me.”

“If that’s the case, come along, my boy,” said Bruidoux, taking up a long and stout leather strap which had been used in tying up some bundles. He passed one end of the strap around his belt, fastened securely the other end to the young captive’s body, and thus equipped overtook the detachment, which was marching down the hill around the fast-disappearing morning fog.

V.

“Sire, ride forward no more ; return, for thou art betrayed.”—
Ancient Chronicle.

THE aspect of the country through which the detachment travelled after leaving the hapless castle of Groach changed gradually. Barren heaths and rugged hills no longer formed the horizon ; the roads became better and more regular, following live hedges raised like natural breastworks, and supported at close intervals by tall trees laden with thick foliage ; fields or meadows scattered with apple-trees in bloom were enclosed within these hedges. At the sound of the horses' feet, big oxen thrust through the thickets their meditative heads, and contemplated the travellers with an absent look. Here and there, through the verdure, small cottages could be seen, covered with a coating of lichen and moss. The oaks in the hedges and the apple-trees in the fields, drawing near in the distance, seemed to cover the whole country with a dense forest, in the midst of which the slender points of the steeples indicated from time to time the location of a village.

But the feelings of peace and happiness excited by this rustic landscape yielded to the recent and disastrous souvenirs marked at almost every step by blackened ruins or long, tumular mounds. The prolific nature of the soil hastened in vain to cover with flowers and pleasing sights the traces of the crimes and the misfortunes of men ; the fields lay fallow ; those who should

have tilled them were fattening the useless furrows with their own remains. From time to time, the travelers heard a sob or the dull murmur of a voice behind a bush; they discovered women and children kneeling and praying, living effigies upon unknown graves. Broken trunks, shattered branches, sinister breaks in the hedges, the still recent traces of desperate trampling of feet, the strange color of the mud in the ditches, betrayed from place to place the theatre of one of those combats in which the glory of the victor, whoever he might be, was lost in the crime of the fratricide.

The caravan halted in a village, dined, and rested for an hour; then the journey continued until night without any incident of note save the meeting of a few republican camps with which they exchanged the countersign. The twilight was beginning to mark out more distinctly upon the sky the outlines of the horizon, when the timid Colibri addressed the following question to the circumspect Bruidoux:

“Am I wrong, sergeant, when I imagine that America is a country where most men are monkeys?”

The sergeant shrugged his shoulders with such a violent motion that he fairly shook the little long-haired captive he was dragging in tow. “Why don’t you come along, young scamp?” said Bruidoux.—“Let me tell you first, Colibri, and by way of preamble, that this little federalist is beginning to worry me in an extraordinary manner. As to the idea you have conceived of America and of its inhabitants, whom you take for monkeys, it would cause you to be taken for an ass yourself in any elegant society. . . . Will you walk or not, you half-rascal? You dare pull that rope again,

and I'll make you immediately acquainted with the configuration of my foot.—There are no monkeys, Colibri: it is an animal invented by priests and tyrants to humiliate free mankind. America, Colibri— You are pulling on the rope again, you urchin; take care now, for we are going to move along lively— America, my boy, is exactly as I was telling— Get up there, little Coburg. And you will be able now to talk about it with ease and— Very good, my young cock! you don't weigh as much as a feather now— With ease and facility, Colibri, my friend. . . . Hey! twenty thousand pipes! where is the chouan's son? May the devil be dead if he has not cut off the rope! Stop! stop the prisoner! there, in the field, on the right!”

The child had indeed just availed himself of the first shades of the night to effect an escape of which he had doubtless procured the means during the dinner halt. He was now running with all his might across a ploughed field which a narrow ditch alone separated from the road. Bruidoux leaped over the ditch and started on the track of the fugitive; the soldiers followed him, uttering loud shouts; but they were not half-way across the field when the child had already scaled the hedge that closed it at its farther extremity and was contiguous to a thick wood. He turned around when he found himself master of the position, and made a sign with his hand as if he wished to speak. Some half a dozen guns were instantly levelled in the direction of the little fellow.

“What is this?” shouted Bruidoux in a panting voice: I'll knock down with the butt of my musket the first man who dares fire! Have we any child-killers here, now? Speak, my jewel!”

"Take good care of my top!" cried the escaped captive. Whereupon he jumped into the woods and disappeared.

"Very well," said Bruidoux, getting back to the road amid the ill-suppressed laughter of his comrades, "laugh as much as you like, my boys. Don't somebody want to tickle me a little under the nose?—Your top, little rascal!" added the old sergeant between his teeth. "Let me live long enough to find you with beard on your chin; and if I don't make you swallow the top with the string and the point, and the goat and the cabbage . . ."

"Well, sergeant," interrupted Hervé, scarcely concealing the satisfaction he felt at the result of the adventure, "here you are, then, gone over to the royalists!"

"Ma foi, citizen major," replied Bruidoux with a trifle of ill-humor, "if you mean that I should have allowed the boy to be shot, order five marbles lodged in my head, and say no more about it. 'It isn't my way of thinking.'"

"Nor mine, old Bruidoux," said Hervé. "I know what you are worth face to face with a man. As to women and children, we must leave them to the jailors and the executioners who disgrace the republic."

The brave sergeant, completely redeemed in the eyes of his inferiors by the young commander's words, unfastened the now useless strap that bound his waist, and used it to admonish the merriest of the band that he had not forgotten their indiscreet merriment. He was interrupted in this pleasing pastime by the game-keeper, Kado, who held out his flask to him cordially, saying:

"We do not perhaps think alike on many subjects,

comrade, but all I have in the world is at the service of the man who has pity in his heart for weak creatures."

The sergeant seemed more surprised than angry at this overture; he meditated for a moment, while hugging the flask until he felt nearly suffocated. Returning it then to the Breton:

"All brave men," he said gravely, "have the same ideas about certain things."

The march had been resumed, and, under the influence of fatigue and of the night, silence was soon restored along the ranks of the column. Hervé, having noticed more than once that Andrée tottered on her saddle as if nearly overcome with sleep, had placed himself by her side. The girl, under his protection, yielded with naïve confidence to a drowsiness which was lulled by the measured gait of her horse. She was awakened by the distinct though still distinct sounds of a little bell striking eleven. Andrée listened to it attentively, and suddenly uttering a cry of joy:

"Come on, Bellah!" she exclaimed, "'tis our Kergant! 'tis the chapel bell! Excuse me, brother, I am going ahead, with your permission!" And without waiting for an answer, the graceful child started at a gallop through a broad and sombre avenue, at the end of which lights sparkled among the trees like glow-worms in the grass.

The seigneurial manor of Kergant was a construction of austere and almost cloister-like aspect. It was built in the form of an almost regular triangle, each side of which was closed by a tall tower with pointed roof. The foundations were immersed in a moat filled with water; but a permanent bridge had taken the place of the old drawbridge and gave access to the main en-

trance. The little chapel whose bell had just been ringing stood to the right of the castle, on a small hillock the slopes of which were covered with grass. Several buildings, used as farm-houses and stables, contributed with the chapel in surrounding the space which extended in front of the manor, and stood in lieu of a court-yard. In the centre of that vacant space, servants bearing torches were listening respectfully to the orders given them by a man with white hair but erect figure and firm and manly countenance. The Marquis de Kergant was dressed throughout in black; a crape was tied to his left arm, and a similar symbol of mourning was fastened to the handle of the hunting-knife that hung at his side. Andrée and Bellah alighted at the same moment, and the marquis clasped them both at once to his heart. The canoness approached next to embrace her brother, after which she whispered a few words rapidly to him. The old *seigneur* advanced then towards the Scottish maid and pointed out the chateau with ceremonious politeness. The daughter of the MacGregor took the arm of the canoness and started towards the entrance of the castle.

"Follow them, my children," said the marquis; "you must be worn out with fatigue."

"Excuse me, father," interrupted Andrée in a beseeching tone, "but we did not come alone; there is some one—mon Dieu! some one."

"Go, my child," rejoined the marquis. "Your brother's room is ready."

Andrée lifted eagerly her adopted father's hand to her lips, dropped a tear upon it, and withdrew with her friend. M. de Kergant followed the girls as far as the bridge

that crossed the moat. There he stopped, drew up his servants in line behind him, and waited.

At this moment, the republican detachment was entering the court-yard of the chateau. Hervé alighted from his horse, and advanced towards the marquis with an emotion that he could scarce control. Francis and the soldiers followed him at a short distance. Reaching the door, he took off his hat and bowed low to the old man.

“Monsieur,” said the Marquis de Kergant, returning his salutation, “accept my thanks.”

“I wish, sir, that they may be addressed to me in as hearty a spirit as I desire to deserve them.”

“Rest assured, citizen major, since such is your title,” rejoined the marquis, “that I am not of those whose lips say Yes when the heart says No. Allow me to offer to the Count de Pelven hospitality for the night.”

Hervé was surprised and offended at the bitter and haughty accent that marked those words.

“Monsieur,” he said, “I have the same favor to ask for my lieutenant and for my men.”

“And they will take it, I suppose, in case I refuse?”

“I beg of you, sir”

“That is, however,” interrupted the marquis, raising his voice, “what I would be curious to see. I have taken an oath never to allow, as long as I live, a single one of the cut-throats of your pretended republic to enter beneath my roof, and it is enough that I break my oath in favor of your father’s son.”

On hearing this defying declaration, a murmur of anger broke forth in the ranks of the grenadiers. Hervé beckoned to them to keep silence, and turning towards the marquis:

“And may I ask you, sir,” he said, “if you took that oath on the day when you signed a treaty with our representatives and accepted an amnesty from our pretended republic?”

“No!” exclaimed Monsieur de Kergant with energy; “but I took it the day when you stained your flag with the blood of your King, and I renewed it the day I discovered how far your word could be relied upon—only yesterday, on hearing that you had basely and treacherously murdered the martyr’s son in his prison! There is no longer any treaty, no longer any peace. Enough! Walk in, Citizen Hervé, and fear nothing; but ask me no more.”

“You do not seriously believe me capable of submitting to such hospitality,” said Hervé with a smile whose quiet politeness caused a blush to rise to the old gentleman’s cheek. “Since I am on hostile ground, I know how a soldier should spend the night there.—Come, boys, we shall camp out all together.”

The grenadiers replied with a cheer, and followed the young man, who was walking hurriedly away from the chateau.

“Major,” said Bruidoux, “he wouldn’t be so proud if he had not some dozens *chouans* hid in his cellar. Nevertheless, say but the word and we’ll see who’ll sleep outside to-night.”

“No,” replied Hervé, “they would say again that we break our treaties. Besides, I am not sorry for this reception, it spares me— But who is this following us? Ah! is that you, Kado? Well, my friend, do me a favor: take care of my horses. I suppose that the poor beasts are not included in the oath.”

"It will be done, sir. Is there nothing more you wish?"

"These good fellows are hungry, my good Kado. Go down to the village, and bring up something for their supper. You'll find us on the Rocky Moor. Here is my purse."

"But, Monsieur Hervé . . . "

"Take my purse, I tell you, and on your life pay for everything, if you have to thrust money in that old man's hand!"

VI.

“Thy voice is sweet to me, O child of the night,
For phantoms frighten not my soul ;
Thy voice is soothing to my heart.”

Ossianic Songs.

GUIDED by the still living recollections of his childhood, Major Hervé entered with his troop in a labyrinth of paths that led them, after a march of a few minutes, to the foot of a steep and deserted moor. Save a few clumps of furze, the only vegetation apparent upon this sterile soil was a species of thin grass, close as moss, that covered it from top to bottom and offered but a very uncertain foothold. Not one rock, nor even the smallest pebble, could be seen to justify the name of Rocky Moor, which Hervé had given to it. The soldiers stopped, hesitating to climb that barren slope gloomily swept by the night-wind, and which seemed, of all places in the world, the least calculated to afford them shelter.

“Patience, my friends,” said the young man, “I have a surprise for you up yonder.”

The soldiers began then resolutely the ascent. Hervé was following them, when the sound of a panting voice, calling him by name, stopped him short.—“It’s your sister,” said Francis.

“Yes, yes, it was to be expected,” murmured Hervé. “Lead the men, my friend ; I’ll overtake you in a moment.”

The young lieutenant turned to go, and at the same in-

stant Andrée fell panting and exhausted in her brother's arms.

"Come, my child, come," said Hervé; "we should have expected it. No emotion, I beg of you."

Andrée raised her head to speak, but an explosion of grief threw her back, suffocated and palpitating, on the young man's breast.

"Poor child! come, have a little courage," murmured Hervé.

Then, lifting his contracted brow towards heaven with a sudden gesture of despair, while Andrée continued to sob as if her heart was about breaking on her brother's heart:

"O God!" he said, "O my God! she is praying for peace. Do hearken unto her! She is beseeching Thee to put an end to our discords. God of mercy, grant her prayer!"

"Take me away! take me away from here!" exclaimed Andrée.

Hervé made her sit at his side, and took her hand:

"Take you away, dear child? Where? To a camp? to a prison?"

"No matter, brother; I cannot stay beneath a roof from which you have been insultingly repelled."

"But you are mistaken; I have simply been treated as an enemy, as indeed I am. It is quite natural that the rumor, true or false, of the young pretender's death should have exasperated M. de Kergant to the point of making him forget his dignity."

"You will not take me away, Hervé?" said Andrée in a voice as tender as a caress.

"So long as I have not a safe and honorable shelter to

offer you, my child, I must leave you in that which our father selected for you." Hervé rose as he uttered these words. "We must part," he added; "I will not leave time to our men to conceive the idea that I am forsaking them."

"Part!" repeated Andrée. "Have we met but to part again so soon and in such a manner?"

"I promise you, Andrée, not to leave to-morrow without first seeing you again."

Andrée made him repeat that promise, and Hervé after pressing her to his heart, turned abruptly away and began running up the hill. The summit of the moor formed a vast plateau smooth as a lawn, and the edges of which sloped gently towards more abrupt declivities; its singularly savage aspect had no boundary save that of a stormy sky, upon which the intermittent light of the moon cut out the clouds in fanciful outlines. Towards the centre of the plateau, a large space was scattered with blocks of stone, which at a distance presented to the eye but a confused and chaotic appearance; but on getting nearer, it was easily seen that a mysterious order had presided over the seeming irregularities of these piles. The stones were of all shapes and dimensions; some stood isolated like colossal needles, or were drawn symmetrically in long parallel lines like a procession of phantoms petrified in their grayish mantles; many rested horizontally upon two supports, according to that elementary principle of architecture which children put in practice in the construction of their card-houses. Finally, the same principle had combined series of massive blocks and flat stones so as to form low, covered galleries closed at one extremity.

While the soldiers were examining these débris with wondering curiosity, Kado arrived, driving before him a small horse loaded down with a supply of provisions and dry wood, to which the soldiers gave at once a hearty reception. The old game-keeper volunteered his assistance in kindling fires, shook hands with the sergeant, and retired, promising to Hervé and Francis to have their horses ready for them at the foot of the moor the next morning at daybreak.

After supper, the grenadiers selected their resting-places under shelter of the druidical vaults, and each one fell quietly asleep beneath these stones on which the rust of ages covered a rust of human blood.

Hervé alone continued for some time to walk about the once sacred precincts, his mind filled with the recollections of his boyhood and his youth, when he often wandered in company with Bellah among the ruins of the old druidic hill. Exhausted with fatigue and unable to sleep, he had laid down to rest on one of the stone tables, in the attitude of a statue leaning over a tomb, and he was meditating over the happy days of by-gone years. Suddenly he shuddered: the white form of a woman moving noiselessly among the blocks of stone was advancing towards him. Hervé started to his feet, laying his hand upon his brow with the violent motion of a man who doubts his own sanity; but already the white apparition was upon him, and he recognized Bellah.

“You! you here and at this time, my sister!” he exclaimed, seizing her hand.

Mademoiselle de Kergant withdrew her hand.

“Will Major Hervé,” she said coldly, “grant me a few minutes’ conversation?”

Hervé, recalled to the reality of the present, bowed and took off his hat; then, seeing that Bellah's anxious eyes were trying to pierce the surrounding darkness :

“Mademoiselle de Kergant may speak without fear,” he said; “my men are sleeping by yonder fires.”

The girl rested her elbow on the stone by the side of which Hervé was standing, and meditated for a moment in silence.

“Monsieur,” she said at last, “your government has severed by a fresh crime the treaties that bound us to it.”

“I was not aware of it, mademoiselle,” said Hervé.

“I tell you so,” rejoined Mademoiselle de Kergant. Hervé bowed. “Monsieur,” she went on, “is your idea of duty such that you deem yourself engaged by your honor towards a perjured government? Are you prepared to accept the most odious complicities which it may please your Republic to impose upon you?”

“Mademoiselle de Kergant,” replied Hervé, “must allow me to repudiate the complicity into which she attempts to involve me. I am responsible for myself alone. I do not serve men; I serve ideas. I deplore the cruel deeds which these ideas have inspired, and I would like to see them punished; I pity the martyrs they have made, and I would like to save them; but even in the dust of the ruins and in the blood that stains them, these principles remain pure; they remain worthy of the fidelity I have pledged unto them. These are words I am loath to speak to a woman, but I am driven to it. As to this fresh crime, Mademoiselle de Kergant will suffer me to wait before judging it, until I have heard it from impartial lips.”

“Do you doubt my word, sir?” said Bellah in a tone of bitter scorn.

“I doubt your word, yes!” exclaimed Hervé with a sudden burst of passion; “I doubt your word! I doubt your very voice; I doubt those cold lips and the strange words they utter. Who are you? What do you wish? Who sent you here? Here, on this spot!—to have selected this very spot to overwhelm me! By Heaven, ’tis an incredible outrage, a cruelty that passes man’s understanding! Begone!”

At the sudden outburst of this storm, the girl’s resolution seemed to falter, and it was in a low and feeble voice, like that of a submissive child, that she replied: “Mon Dieu! Hervé, I am going.” But instead of going, she leaned against the stone altar and laid her two hands upon her heart as if to subdue its throbbings.

“Bellah,” Hervé resumed more gently, “pardon me; but you have filled the measure of my sorrows. Do please retire. You will leave here a man in whose soul there is not room for one grief more. Your task is accomplished. Farewell!”

“Oh! not yet, not thus, Hervé! I came, I hoped. . . . Yes, I hoped to be protected on this spot at least by your recollections of the past. Whatever may have been for you the two long years that separate us from it”

“They have been such,” interrupted Hervé, “that I would gladly give them, as well as all those that may follow, for one hour of the old time. . . .”

“Oh! may God be a thousand times blessed, if it be so! That time may come again, Hervé. You may re-enter that family which is your family as well as mine;

you may find again a father, sisters; you may find us all, dear brother! You can do so; will you do so?"

"If I could only hope that might become possible some day!" said the young man, shaking his head mournfully.

"That day has come!" rejoined Bellah eagerly. "Listen, Hervé: the war is about to begin again; I might tell you . . . I have positive reasons to affirm that our cause shall triumph. . . . That cause is that of your ancestors; 'tis the cause of God! You may have been mistaken, Hervé, but now your eyes must be open. . . . Oh! how we shall love you, Hervé! My father already has ambitious projects for you. He will see that justice is done to your talents, to your courage. If you require any proofs, Hervé, here, take this." As she spoke these words, she took from her bosom a paper which she laid in the young man's hand; but the latter throwing it at once at her feet:

"The justice I should deserve," he said, "would be the scorn of my enemies, the scorn of my friends, and your own scorn, Bellah!"

"Mine! You are mistaken! I could never scorn the man who nobly atones for his wrongs."

"You, first of all, Bellah! and you would be right. Not another word on that subject, I beg of you."

"O Dieu! And suppose I were to tell you, Hervé, that you cannot return among the republicans that death awaits you there?"

"'Tis a chance I must expect in the profession I follow, and every instant of my life makes me more resigned to such a fate."

"Yes," rejoined the girl in a tone of incomprehensible

conviction ; “ you are ready to die a soldier’s death ; but to be executed, to die an ignominious death—the death of a traitor—are you ready for that ? say.”

“ The death of a traitor ? ” repeated Hervé ; “ that is impossible.”

“ You shall be accused, you shall ! In the name of Heaven, doubt it not ! ”

“ But of what treason ? May I know ? ”

“ Alas ! were my own father’s life at stake instead of yours, it would be out of my power to tell you.”

“ As you please ; I shall hear from my judges.”

“ Hervé ! your heart has grown callous amid those bloody men. . . . You are going to sacrifice your life without thinking that it does not belong to yourself alone. Poor Andrée, . . . ”

“ Should anything happen to me,” said Hervé turning his face aside,” I know what a heart I leave near to hers.”

With a sudden and violent gesture, Bellah seized the young man’s arm, and raising towards him her great, moist eyes :

“ And I ? ” she said.

Bellah’s desperate gesture, her low and confused tone, imparted such an expression to this word, that Hervé felt moved to the very depths of his heart, as if the lips of the woman he loved had touched his own. He took Mademoiselle de Kergant’s hand in his, and gazing passionately at the girl, who stood straight, with drooping lids and heaving bosom :

“ Bellah,” he said, “ I love you ardently. My life for the past two years does not reckon one single minute upon which the traces of that love are not stamped ; all the

rest serves but as useless diversion to that thought. But, whether or not I am mistaken, I see no honor outside the duty I have taken on myself, and I could not live disgraced, not even near you, Bellah—least of all near you.”

As he uttered these words, Mademoiselle de Kergant dropped her head upon her bosom as if overwhelmed:

“*Mon Dieu!*” she murmured; “and there is nothing more that I can say, Hervé,” she went on in a desponding tone; “I see that your decision is irrevocable; this is a supreme, eternal farewell, therefore, and it is here, on this spot, that you speak thus to me! We shall never meet again, never; all is over . . . all is over! May God forgive me for having spoken in my own name. . . . I have mingled the interest of a woman’s miserable heart. . . . I thought I was doing for the best. . . . and it is only a shame. . . .”

“Bellah! dear Bellah! you are breaking my heart. Farewell!”

“Farewell, then!” exclaimed the girl, apparently calling up all her courage. “Farewell, heartless and pitiless man! I shall fulfil my duty as implacably as you do yours. . . . Farewell!”

And she hastened away, but with such a light tread, that her departure, as well as her coming, seemed like the silent vision of a dream.

As soon as she had disappeared in one of the paths that wound down the face of the moor, Pelven approached eagerly the edge of the plateau, that he might collect the last crumbs of that happiness that was escaping him forever. He fancied that he heard a man’s voice mingling with Bellah’s voice. The idea that Mademoiselle de Kergant’s attempt had had a witness, and that it was the re-

sult of a sort of diplomatic agreement, occurred at once to Hervé's mind, in the most striking and unfavorable light. Taking a more direct path, he walked cautiously down a few steps, and he saw plainly, by Bellah's side, a man of elegant figure, elastic step, and quick and youthful gesture. Mademoiselle de Kergant seemed to interrupt from time to time, with brief objections, her companion's animated speech, which now rose to the most sonorous modulations, and now fell to the tone of the most intimate confidence. When they had reached the base of the moor, Hervé, thanks to his minute knowledge of the ground, managed to follow them across the fields without being discovered. He strove to apply to the unknown's graceful figure, to the peculiar tone of his voice, some recollection of his own past life which might settle at least a part of his doubts, give a name to his anguish, and surrender a man to his hatred ; but it was in vain.

As they had approached to within two hundred steps of the chateau, the unknown stopped abruptly, spoke some passionate words, and grasped Mademoiselle de Kergant's arm and hand. Hervé, uttering a hoarse exclamation of rage, jumped over the hedge behind which he had been hidden, and he was already rushing towards the theatre of this suspicious scene, when an unexpected incident kept him motionless : Mademoiselle de Kergant had freed her arm, and taking herself now her companion's hand she pressed her lips upon it, bowing down to the very dust of the road. After which she started rapidly towards the chateau, followed more deliberately by the man who had just been the object of this extraordinary favor.

Hervé, setting then all mystery aside, and impelled by irresistible anger, advanced rapidly :

"Eh ! monsieur, if you please !" he called in a suppressed though very distinct voice.

The unknown turned around :

"Who goes there ? Who calls me ?" he said.

"I, sir. Please have patience for two seconds, I beg of you."

"Confound it ! it's the officer again," murmured the stranger. Whereupon he hurried so fast, that he had crossed the castle gate before Hervé had been able to overtake him.

"No," thought the young man as he walked slowly back to the moor, "never have the wildest fancies of a feverish night brought up before me such visions as this. Bellah, the proud, the chaste maiden on her knees before a man, receiving, nay, anticipating his caresses . . . and that when her lips were still quivering with the avowal made to another. Bellah wiping a hypocrite's tears with a courtesan's hand ! Thank God ! I know what to think now."

And taking the white plume from his pocket, he tore it with fury and scattered its light fragments upon the soil.

After this execution in effigy, Major Hervé walked up to the expiring fires of the bivouac, and lay down within a few steps of Francis. The excessive prostration of that day of fatigue and anxiety overcame at last the agitation of his mind, and it required at daylight the hand of the punctual Bruidoux to rouse him from a sound sleep.

A few moments later, little Andrée reached, all out of breath, the summit of the moor ; she cast a hurried glance over the plateau, and seeing it deserted, she uttered a heart-rending cry of distress ; then throwing herself on the ground, she wept long, her head buried in her hands.

VII.

“The Republic, madame, cannot lose him, negligent though she be in keeping him.”—*Voiture's Letters*.

THE main body of the republican army had then its quarters at Vitry on the boundary line of Ile-et-Vilaine and Mayenne. The commander-in-chief occupied, half way between Rennes and Vitry, a dwelling of modest appearance, something between a manor and a farmhouse, and which had no claims to the honor of such a guest but its rustic and retired situation. It is to that residence that we now beg the reader to follow us, warning him that four days have elapsed between the last scenes of our story and those that are about to follow.

It was one o'clock in the afternoon; in the enclosed ground that stretched in front of the main building, soldiers in various uniforms were playing or talking with a mixture of reserve and freedom that revealed the master's presence; the most industrious were busy furbishing their arms or their horses' bits; the more melancholy, lying on the ground in various and frequently opposite attitudes, seemed, the ones to watch the changing combinations of the clouds, the others to indulge in botanical studies. At this moment, the sentry posted outside the gate shouted, “Who goes there?” to which a short and husky voice replied, and the next moment five horsemen with disordered and mud-stained garments rode noisily into the court. Four of them

wore the uniform of hussars of the Republic; the other, who had come in first, seemed a stranger to the army: he wore no distinctive signs, save a tricolored belt and plume. The silence that suddenly succeeded the tumult of a military recreation, and the sort of timidity with which the new-comer's name was whispered around, showed that he was an old acquaintance for the greater number of those present, and an acquaintance met with more respect than pleasure. The man who had just received the equivocal homage of this reception justified it fully, whatever claims he might otherwise have to it, by the ascetic severity of his features and the fixed and, as it were, implacable expression of his eyes. Throwing the reins of his horse into the hands of a soldier, he entered the house, walked rapidly up the interior stairs, and reached an antechamber where two sentries were on duty; pushing aside, with a gesture of extreme preoccupation, one of the soldiers, who, while giving him the military salute, seemed to hesitate to let him pass, he opened a double door, penetrated into the adjoining room, and seemed to have found at last what he was seeking with so much haste and so little ceremony.

On a sofa sat a man of tall and elegant stature, whose features beamed with manly beauty and the glamour of youth. This personage wore a military coat embroidered with golden oak-leaves on the collar and cuffs; in front of him, a tricolored scarf and a sword lay on the corner of a table, a few steps from the sofa. At the sight of the man with the austere countenance, he rose, and, in a slightly haughty tone, he asked:

"You seem to have had a long journey, citizen representative; do you bring me any orders?"

"No; but I bring some news."

"And of what nature?"

"I should say good, were I to judge by the narrow light of my pride, for it confirms all my previsions, it justifies all my unheeded warnings."

"You mean, I suppose," replied the young general, "that the pacification is broken."

"Openly and audaciously. The country is ablaze from Lower-Maine to the depths of Brittany; Pluvigner is in the hands of the brigands; they have surprised and captured one of our corvettes at Vannes. Duhesme has been defeated at Plélan, Humbert at Camors. Our stores at Pont-de-Buis, in Finisterre, have been seized; our camps through the whole of Morbihan broken and destroyed."

"Is that all?" said the general, who affected to listen to the story of all these disasters with as much indifference as the representative took pleasure in enumerating them.

"No, that is not all: a Bourbon is at the head of the rebels."

"What! that is impossible!" exclaimed the young republican chief, suddenly losing all semblance of indifference. "That would be terrible indeed!" he added in a lower tone of voice.

"That is certain. Duhesme and Humbert have seen him; Humbert even spoke to him during the fight. He is said to be the *ci-devant* Count d'Artois, Capet's brother."

"The Count d'Artois! Impossible!" again said the general, whose animated gestures betrayed profound agitation of mind. "Only a moment ago I heard of the arrival of his aid-de-camp, the *ci-devant* Marquis de

Rivière, at Charrette's head-quarters; but of the prince, not a word; he had not left British soil— And which way—how—at what fatal minute has he been able to set foot in Brittany?”

“It is precisely on that point that I desire to consult you, citizen general. The active surveillance exercised at all points of the coast gives to the apparition of the *ci-devant* prince such a character, that it cannot be explained without painful conjectures. The word treason has been uttered.”

The general, starting from his pensive attitude, straightened himself up with vivacity; and crossing his fiery glance with the hard and cold look of the representative, he repeated in a voice of thunder:

“The word treason has been uttered? Against whom?”

“You are purposely misconstruing my words, citizen general; no one thinks of suspecting you, but they do charge you with placing your confidence too lightly, and bestowing your friendship upon suspected individuals. I refer to one of your officers, the one whom you admit into your closest intimacy, the *ci-devant* Count de Pelven.”

“Major Pelven, citizen representative, has made greater sacrifices in behalf of the Republic than either you or I. To have left him for two years in the humble rank that he holds is a crying injustice, which I mean soon to repair.”

“Make haste, then, if you do not wish to be forestalled; for the Bourbon, if he be not ungrateful, owes a lofty reward to the pure patriot who went to receive him on his landing, and who escorted him into the very midst of the brigands' army.”

“Have you any proofs of what you state, citizen commissioner?”

“I have,” replied the *conventionnel*, taking a letter from his portfolio; “here is what one of our agents writes from England; you may judge for yourself whether this information, taken in connection with the facts which are already in your possession, constitute sufficient proofs. This letter, unfortunately, reached me two days after the event it was intended to guard against. Listen: ‘The British frigate *Loyalty* is about to land in Brittany a Bourbon, said to be the Duke d’Enghien, son of Condé or the Count d’Artois: the latter, most likely. He travels in the garb of a woman in company with the sister and daughter of the *ci-devant* Kergant, who have obtained a permit to return through the agency of the *ci-devant* Pelven, a republican officer standing very high in the general-in-chief’s confidence. They are relying upon Pelven’s connivance to protect the landing, which will take place some day in the coming decade, on the southern coast of Finisterre; the whole West, Normandy included this time, is only waiting for this oft-promised chief, to rise *en masse*.’”

The general, during the reading of this letter, had remained motionless, all his features expressing utter amazement.

“Is it true? is it clear?” added the representative, handing him the letter.

The young man glanced rapidly over it, uttered a sort of groan, sank upon the sofa, and remained for some time, his head resting upon his hand, absorbed in painful thought.

The only witness of his anguish was not a man from

whom any sympathy for human weakness, however generous its source, might be expected; nay, there was even a secret shade of triumph in the doubtful glance with which he contemplated the young republican general's prostration.

"What must surprise you," he added, "is the degree of audacity which your *ci-devant* friend is about to display. Instead of remaining wisely near him he has served so well, I am assured that he is on his way to join you and continue as a spy the task he has begun as a traitor."

"Spy! Pelven!" murmured the general, as if the coupling of these two words had presented an inexplicable riddle to his mind.

"It is necessary, above all, citizen general, that justice be done."

The general waited a few moments before replying; then raising his head at last, as if emerging from deep meditation, he said:

"Very well, citizen representative, it shall be done."

"I am going to wait for this Pelven's return; you will give me a sufficient escort to take him to Rennes, where I wish to question him in presence of my colleagues. After which, he will be tried before the revolutionary tribunal."

"I have told you, citizen, that justice shall be done. Do you understand?"

"Not at all," replied the representative, with a look of great surprise. "Am I to understand that you refuse to surrender this great criminal to the nation's vengeance?"

"I hold from the nation all the power necessary to serve and avenge it. I need borrow from no one."

The general spoke with a deliberate accent and quiet decision that succeeded in disturbing the coolness of the representative.

"Young man!" he exclaimed violently, "I have suffered much from you; much more than could be expected from my position and my duty; but this goes beyond all limit and all patience. Do you forget who I am? Do you forget that I have but to open this window and utter two words to cause your epaulets to be torn off by your own soldiers?"

"Try it," said the general, who, having once taken his resolution, seemed to delight in his recent and dangerous independence.

"This is sheer madness!" murmured the representative, not far indeed from seeing an act of insanity in this defiance of his terrible power.

"It is simply," rejoined the general in the same remarkably quiet tone, "it is simply an experiment I wish to make: of us two there is one too many in the nation's confidence. I mean to find out which. The occasion offers; I seize it. Since this immense, frightful war is about to blaze forth again, I will not attempt to extinguish it unless I am first rid of the iron fetters which you have riveted to my feet, nor if I am to behold my every movement controlled by an outrageous inquisition, my intentions suspected by fanaticism, my plans thwarted by ignorance. Go, now; go, and inform upon me; the committee shall judge between us; but, believe me, citizen, attempt no imprudent test of your power; you may see that my patience is exhausted as well as

your own, and no one, under my eyes, shall provoke my army to indiscipline with impunity. Farewell ! ”

During this imperious explosion, the *conventionnel*'s face had become suddenly overspread with a purplish hue, which yielded almost at once to a livid pallor. His trembling lips seemed unable to express the wrath that shook his frame. He could only answer a hoarse exclamation to the threatening farewell of his rival, and he left the room abruptly, making with the hand a gesture of implacable resentment.

VIII.

“ Cette gloire était due aux mânes d’un tel homme,
D’emporter avec eux la liberté de Rome.”—CORNEILLE, *Cinna*.

THE general, rid of the representative’s presence, remained for a few minutes on the same spot, with down-cast head and dreamy eyes. Then, making suddenly the gesture of a man who assumes resolutely all the consequences of an irresistible act, and who wishes to turn his mind on some other train of thoughts, he rose and approached a window opening on the court-yard. He seemed not to find what he was looking for, and began pacing the room impatiently, stopping occasionally before the window or in front of a clock placed on a console. At intervals, the thoughts that agitated his mind escaped almost inadvertently from his lips. “ What deceit!” he murmured. “ Such are men! A rude and unexpected lesson. . . . His dupe, . . . that is the word . . . his laughing-stock . . . so long and so openly! and what misery he is going to cause! how much blood! An insult to me . . . a public crime. . . . Everything! The wretch!”

The sound of a light knock at the door interrupted the general. After he had answered to come in, the door opened and the elegant and delicate figure of Major Hervé de Pelven appeared before the eyes of Hoche.

The general advanced slowly towards the man whom

an hour before he called his friend, and began examining him with singular curiosity, as if trying to detect in his well-known features some hideous trace heretofore unseen. Closing his examination suddenly with a significant shrug of his shoulders, he partly sat on the edge of the table where lay his sabre and scarf, and without ceasing to scrutinize Pelven's face:

"Where is Francis?" he said.

This question failed to rouse Hervé from the dumb surprise into which he had been plunged by the general's unaccountable reception.

"I ask you where is Francis," repeated the latter in a louder tone. "What have you done with him?"

"General," replied the major, "Francis is below, in the yard. We have just arrived together."

"Ah! Well, tell me, Monsieur de Pelven: you have succeeded to your heart's content, have you not?"

"I have, general," dryly replied Hervé whose pride was becoming gradually alarmed at a manner and a language so different from the cordial familiarity to which he was accustomed.

"It is fortunate for you, as well as for myself, sir."

"I regret being unable to understand you, general."

"Ah! and tell me, did you see any *chouans* on your way?"

"Everything I have seen, citizen general, is threatening and indicative of an early outbreak. We even thought we heard the sound of cannon last night and yesterday."

"Really! you have indeed performed there a most dangerous campaign, and which will not remain unrewarded, if there is still such a thing as justice in the

world. But I must first congratulate you, I suppose, on your marvellous talent in the special branch you have had the good taste to select, Monsieur de Pelven ; never, I confess, did a mask of infamy look so much like an honest man's face." An intense blush suddenly suffused the young major's cheeks and brow.

"It is easy for me to see," he said, "that I stand here accused of some crime ; it has been predicted to me that it would be so ; but I had a right to expect from General Hoche that some explanation would precede the insult."

Though detected hypocrisy sometimes finds in the inspirations of peril the attitude and the accent of truth, Herve's manner, the assurance of his voice, shook the general's conviction ; but before he had time to answer, his attention was attracted to the yard by the sound of horses' feet followed by a tumult of voices. A few moments later, Francis came into the room with excited look, holding a package of letters in his hand.

"Beg pardon, general," he said ; "there are dispatches brought in by two dragoons from Humbert's and Duhesme's divisions. It seems that things are getting hot yonder."

The general, after patting the young lieutenant on the shoulder in a friendly way, opened the dispatches eagerly and began glancing rapidly over them, interrupting himself frequently with reiterated exclamations ; then dashing suddenly the package of letters to the floor, and addressing Francis in a tone that indicated ill-suppressed wrath :

"My child," he said, "you are about to take in one moment a great step in the experience of life. Here is Monsieur de Pelven, our mutual friend ; look at him

well, and remember for the rest of your life, that beneath that most loyal countenance was hid the soul of a spy and a traitor."

"You have been lied to, general," said Hervé coldly, while an exclamation of surprise and incredulity burst from the young lieutenant's lips.

"As long as the light did not dazzle my eyes, I doubted," rejoined Hoche; "but it is an unpardonable negligence on your part, Monsieur de Pelven, when it is well known that we also have our spies, to allow such important documents as this to lie behind you."

At the same time, he held out before the two officers' eyes a rumpled and mud-stained paper upon which the following lines were written: "Safe-conduct for the Count Hervé de Pelven, brigadier-general in the Catholic and Royal army." Signed, "Charette."

Hervé looked at the little lieutenant and murmured the name of Bellah.

"This safe-conduct," added the general, "was found by one of our secret agents on the moor of Kergant, where you spent one night. There is no lack of other proofs, but this one is enough for me. Now I must ask you, sir, if you have anything to say in defence of your life, for I warn you that it is in danger. Give up your arms, if you please."

Hervé unfastened his belt and handed his sword to Francis, who took it with a trembling hand.

"General," then said the young major, "before God and on my honor, I am innocent. I succumb under appearances to which I have but my word to oppose. That safe-conduct is authentic, but I never accepted it. I may add further that those very men who are supposed

to be my friends attempted to take my life less than five days ago."

"Have you been wounded?" inquired Hoche eagerly. "Can you show me the trace of a wound?"

"None, unfortunately."

"But, general," exclaimed Francis, "I was there and I saw; the major was knocked senseless!"

"With due respect, it seems," said the general, who had recovered his alarming coolness. "Enough, Francis. You are not a child, Monsieur de Pelven, and you know well enough what the conclusion of such an affair is likely to be. Would you prefer having everything quietly settled between us, or shall I summon a court-martial?"

"I desire no judge but yourself, general."

"You certainly could not have one more favorably disposed towards you. You have strangely deceived me, Pelven, cruelly so, I may say. Surely," he went on in a soft and almost gentle tone of voice, "I was far from ever imagining that our relations of esteem and friendship would end in such a manner; it is not without much grief . . ."

The general, whose attention was diverted by the sound of the sobs which poor Francis could no longer withhold, stopped short. He opened the door, and calling one of the soldiers on duty in the outer room:

"Citizen Pelven is your prisoner," he said; "I shall hold you responsible for him. Lieutenant Francis, go wait for me there."

The young lieutenant cast a beseeching look upon his protector, and took refuge in the adjoining room with desperate haste.

“Monsieur Pelven,” then resumed the general, “they wished to take you to prison, and thence you know where. I thought that, after all, you would prefer a soldier’s death.”

“Thank you, general,” said Hervé.

“You have fifteen minutes to live, sir.”

Hoche turned abruptly as he uttered these words, and closing the door behind him, he joined Francis in the antechamber. An old sergeant stood by in a respectful attitude ; the general called him :

“Take fifteen grenadiers with you,” he said ; “go with them into the field on the left of the farm ; have them load their muskets, and wait for the man I am going to send you.”

Then taking his young aid-de-camp by the arm, he fairly dragged him into a room on the opposite side of the landing.

The reader may have remarked with surprise that between the judge and the accused there had been no explanation sufficient to inform the latter of the nature and extent of the crime imputed to him ; but on the one hand, the general believed he had no information to give him on that score ; and on the other, Pelven had seen in what happened to him the logical consequence of the manœuvres the object of which was to bind him to the royalist cause by rendering him suspicious to his own party. It was more than enough in those days to bring about a sentence of death.

Hervé, however, having been left alone under guard of the sentry, strove to master the instinctive revolt, the chaos of ideas and sentiments which the prospect of his early dissolution excites in every human being. Passing

several times his hand over his forehead, the young man walked rapidly about the room for a minute or two, after which he stopped and drew a long breath as if feeling victorious at last in the supreme struggle he had just sustained. He then sat at the table, and hurriedly wrote a few lines addressed to his sister. Ten minutes elapsed, and he was still wrapped in the bitterness of this last effusion, when a slight noise caused him to turn towards the door. His glance met that of Hoche.

"Excuse me, sir, if I disturb you," said the general, keeping his eyes attentively fixed upon those of the young man; "but in the present condition of affairs, it must be quite indifferent to you to tell me exactly the name of the Bourbon who landed in female attire in company with your relatives, and through your kind offices."

At this detailed question, such a sincere expression of surprise appeared upon Hervé's countenance, that the general was unable to repress a slight smile.

"I was sure of it, general! I could have bet my head twenty times over! Down with Jacobins and informers!" exclaimed Francis, rushing excitedly into the room.

"Upon my word, general," stammered Hervé, "I don't know; . . . I really have not the slightest idea what you mean."

Another and more frank smile brightened the handsome features of the young general-in-chief.

"*Vive la République!*" exclaimed Francis, embracing Hervé in a fit of affectionate enthusiasm.

"You see, Major," said Hoche, "that M. Francis has restored you his esteem. You will please excuse me if I am not quite so prompt. To my eyes you are still guilty, at least of excessive imprudence. The truth is, we have,

thanks to you, a Bourbon on our hands. I need not enumerate to you the misfortunes arising from such a complication ; but how can I conceive that the suspicious incidents of your journey did not more seriously excite your distrust ? ”

A single ray of light thrown upon a plot of which we have been the dupe is often sufficient to enable us to see plainly all its ramifications. Thus did Hervé's memory instantly collect, so as to form a complete *corpus delicti*, all the equivocal circumstances of his campaign : the Scotchwoman's extreme reserve, the scenes at the castle of Groach, Bellah's language and her strange insistence on the Rocky Moor, and finally the mysterious character of the individual who had followed Mademoiselle de Kergant in her nocturnal excursion. This last recollection penetrated more deeply than all the rest into the young man's ulcerated heart.

“General,” he said, “I have been outrageously mocked and trifled with. My sister is a child, who doubtless thought it all a good joke. As to the others . . .” Major Hervé completed his idea by a slow and prolonged sign of the head, which indicated bitter resentment.

The general had gone up to a window ; he remained for some time gazing on the vacancy, and with knitted brow, as if laboring under a painful irresolution ; then turning suddenly around :

“Suppose,” he said, “I take upon myself to set you at liberty, what will you do ?” For I cannot think of giving you employment, for the present, at least. Come, what would you do ? ”

“I should go straight to the *chouans*, straight to the prince's head-quarters, since there is a prince.”

“Are you mad?”

“I would resume my name and title,” the young man went on warmly; “for I need the privilege they convey to enable me to tell the hero of that comedy performed at my expense: ‘Sir,’ or ‘Your Highness,’—as the case may be,—‘here is a nobleman like yourself, who comes to call you to account for the peril in which you have placed, by a disloyal trick, not his life, but his honor.’”

“And his love-affairs!” added the general laughingly. “By my faith, Hervé, it may be madness, but it is a madness that I like. I was not born a nobleman; far from it, as you know; but I dare say I would have become one in the days when it only required, for that, to have a taste for adventures and two grains of audacity in the heart. Nevertheless, the project is absolutely unreasonable, and I can say nothing in its favor, except that I would do the same in your place. At all events, should you meet with any mishap, you have here friends who will spare no efforts to deliver or avenge you. Isn’t it so, Francis?”

“I am going with him,” said Francis, “to see the ladies of the court.”

“You’ll be kind enough to wait for me, sir. Pelven, take back your sword; but I advise you to lay your uniform aside. You must also provide yourself with that unlucky safe-conduct; otherwise it would be impossible for you to penetrate among those gentlemen who are in force and on a war footing over the whole country. And, wait a moment,” added the general, while he rapidly wrote two lines on a piece of paper, “hide this in the lining of your coat that you may not be molested by the Republic.”

"Your kindness overwhelms me, general."

"I should like to make you forget that unpleasant moment, Pelven. Go now, and may God have you in His keeping. I hope you leave me without ill feeling."

Hervé took the hand the general was offering him, and pressed it with emotion.

"Farewell, general," he said; "I am going to earn the right to see you again and to continue serving you."

"No, not me, Pelven, never me; but France, but the Republic, the strong, patient, and generous Republic!"

"That is how I understand it," said Hervé. And bowing with affectionate courtesy, he left, accompanied by Francis.

A few moments later, Pelven and the little lieutenant were galloping on the road to Rennes; but after a couple of leagues, Hervé was compelled to take a cross path in order to avoid that city in which his presence might have proved dangerous to himself. It was there the two friends parted, about two hours before sunset, one to return to the general-in-chief's quarters, the other to run the new hazard to which he was urged, against every suggestion of prudence, by the impetuous feelings of an outraged man and a jealous lover.

IX.

“Bois ton sang, Beaumanoir, ta soif se passera.”—*Old French Ballad.*

THE next day, at about the same hour, Major Pelven, wearing an undress military uniform, was riding on the road from Plélan to Ploërmel, and was urging forward his horse in order to reach the latter town before the storm that was brewing in the sky could burst. Dark clouds, stretching as far the horizon, were gradually lowering down to the tops of the motionless trees. At intervals, large drops of rain spotted the dust in the road. Suddenly a flash of lightning tore open the surface of the clouds; a double explosion shook the ground, and at the same time a flood of rain and hail was hurled from the heavens, darkening the atmosphere as with a dense mist. The traveller's horse, dazzled by the lightning, blinded by the rain, jumped aside, stopped short, then started again at a gallop with an impetuous rush which his master was unable to check.

Pelven had given himself up at last, and not without a rather pleasant sensation, to this furious race through the raging elements, when, at a turn of the road, he came near being upset by some ten or twelve horsemen coming from the opposite direction, and who went by him like a whirlwind. Hervé had but just time to recognize dragoons of the Republic, and to ask them why they were in such a hurry; but the rapidity with which he was still carried forward and the formidable roar of

the tempest prevented him from catching their answer. He merely saw one of the men turn around and make a gesture as if to advise him not to go on. Half a league farther, Pelven discovered another squad of horsemen running towards him with the same apparent haste and disorder. The young major, who had succeeded at last in getting his horse under control, placed himself across the road and beckoned to the fugitives—for the fellows certainly did not look as if they were marching towards the enemy—to stop. But the torrent of men and horses merely divided in a double stream to the right and left of him, leaving Hervé absolute master of the position, and joining again behind him.

“Bandits!” exclaimed the indignant young man. And at the same time, starting his horse on the track of the retreating column, he seized one of the dragoons by his belt and called out angrily to him:

“Where are you running to in such a hurry, knave?”

“To Plélan, citizen officer, to the first republican outposts.”

“Are you pursued?”

“I don’t know. They said in Ploërmel that the *chouans* were coming. I don’t believe it, but I followed our boys.”

“And where the devil do you come from?”

“We belong to Humbert’s division, which must be in Quimper by this time; but we have been cut off from our brigade in the rout . . . ”

“What! a rout! you rascal?”

“Ah! there’s no doubt about it, citizen! I advise you not to go beyond Ploërmel for mere amusement.”

“And who commands the *chouans*?”

“Why, their *ci-devant* prince, their god, their idol! They say it was one of our officers helped him land. I congratulate him!”

“And tell me,” interrupted Hervé with some vivacity, “where have we been defeated?”

“At Pluvigner, and, farther on, at Camors, but without disgrace to the flag, major. We held out everywhere as long as it was possible, but recruits were springing up for them everywhere.”

“And where is the army of the Whites now?” said Hervé.

Ah! where is it? that’s it,” rejoined the dragoon. “Imagine, sir, that everything has disappeared: infantry, cavalry, the guns they have taken from us, the munitions, all. The country seems quiet enough now, for there is no one about; but I don’t like the looks of it. Are you not coming back with us, citizen major?”

“No,” said Hervé; “you may go and dry your clothes.”

The dragoon lifting one hand to his helmet, took with the other the rare object which Pelven was offering him in the shape of a silver coin, and started again at a gallop.

Half an hour later, the young major alighted in front of a wayside inn, within gunshot of Ploërmel, and bearing on its modest façade the traditional bunch of mistletoe. Leaving his horse in the hands of a little boy in wooden shoes who gazed at him with an air of distrustful timidity, Pelven entered the kitchen of the inn, in which three peasants were talking in a whisper, but with an appearance of great animation. They rose at once, apparently out of respect, and ceased to speak:

then, making their way towards the door by a series of skilful evolutions while Hervé was addressing some questions to the hostess, they disappeared, one after another, after casting upon the republican uniform a glance that was anything but friendly. The hostess, a woman of some forty years, with a florid complexion, had not seemed at first to look much more kindly upon the honorable customer whom Heaven and the storm had sent her ; but, struck with the young man's pleasant countenance and the politeness with which he expressed himself, she allowed the rigid lines of her circumspect face to relax gradually into a smile, and replied that she would certainly do everything in her power in order that the young gentleman—she meant the worthy citizen—should not regret having entered her house.

While the woman was preparing his supper, Hervé sat down in front of the chimney, and while drying his boots and his cloak, he inquired what there was new about the country, and whether there were any rumors of the arrival of any royalist bands at Ploërmel ; to all of which the discreet matron replied that there was not much news worth repeating ; that she had heard nothing of royalist bands, and that the republican horsemen he had doubtless met must have been frightened at their own shadows ; which the young major had no difficulty in believing, having often seen the best soldiers yield to these unaccountable panics.

During supper, Hervé tried to renew the conversation with his prudent hostess ; he began by praising her culinary skill and the cleanliness of the service, after which he ventured upon asking her some more explicit details upon the condition of the country and the chances of

travelling through it in security. The hostess replied that she was not in the habit of poisoning those who ate in her house; that not having gone beyond Ploërmel for more than ten years, she was unable to say with any degree of precision what was going on there, but that the young gentleman—she meant the citizen officer—would certainly ascertain all he wished to know, if he kept on his journey, which she by no means advised him to do, though she had no reason whatever for deterring him from it.

Hervé was compelled to be satisfied with this information, of which we have given but the brief substance to the reader; he rose from the table, and it being now quite dark, he told the hostess he was going to take a walk through the town, and that he wished to find his room ready on his return. An hour later, he came back, carrying a rather large bundle under his arm; he paid his bill, stating that he wished to start very early the next morning, and retired to his room.

The next morning, as the smiling sun of a June morning caused the liquid diamonds scattered by the storm of the previous day to sparkle on the point of the leaves, a solitary horseman was following at a trot the road that extends to the west of Ploërmel. He was a man in the spring of life: a broad-brimmed hat concealed in part his remarkably elegant features, which formed a contrast, perhaps too much marked, with the rough woollen stuff, the coarse linen shirt, and the clumsy leggings that composed the rest of his costume. He carried in his hand, instead of a whip, a holly stick with leather string. Upon the whole, the outer appearance of the rider, save a few details to which a particularly distrustful observer

would alone have paid any attention, was that of a country horse-dealer on a business tour.

After leaving Ploërmel, the horse-dealer had met a few peasant women who were going to the town with milk, and who had turned around, after returning his salutation, to consider him with a look of naïve surprise; but since he had passed a level heath celebrated in the heroic souvenirs of the country, he had seen no living being on his path; the few dwellings that he saw were closed and silent as if the plague had walled their doors. In this strange solitude, the traveller experienced something like the sad and solemn impression one feels in walking through a graveyard.

His surprise further increased when, on entering a small town situated on the banks of a river, he found it entirely deserted. The houses stood unharmed, but no trace of smoke above the roofs, not a face at the windows, no sound inside the dwellings; the traveller heard only the sonorous ring of his horse's shoes on the wretched pavement of the streets.

He hastened to leave the widowed city, and when he had lost sight of its last chimney, he alighted and removed the bridle from his horse, leaving him to graze at liberty in the rich and moist grass that lined the edges of the road; then, sitting down by a small spring, the young horse-dealer took a few provisions from his *porte-manteau*, and began a school-boy's lunch, often interrupted to listen to the vague murmurs of the solitude. After a halt of half an hour, he mounted his horse again, glanced with some little hesitation at the two roads that crossed at this point, and started at last in the direction of the south. He travelled thus for some hours, meeting only a Breton

peasant equipped for war, from whom he ascertained, not without difficulty, and only after exhibiting a safe-conduct bearing the signature of Charette, that the royalist chiefs were at this moment gathered at the chateau of Kergant, and that the republican troops were moving on from Vitré.

He modified his itinerary accordingly, and without meeting with any further incident of note, he entered the long avenue of ancient trees that gave access to the manor of Kergant, just as the twilight was turning into darkness. About half way up the avenue, he alighted from his horse and fastened him to a fence which inclosed a broad meadow. He then jumped over the fence, crossed the meadow diagonally, and after climbing a bank of which he seemed to know perfectly the weak side, he found himself inside a vast garden that stretched parallel with the left wing of the chateau. Several lighted windows cast a rather bright light upon the narrow foot-paths which box-wood edgings marked out among the flower-beds. The young man stopped and seemed to hesitate; but he soon resumed his walk, taking care, however, to keep outside the luminous zone; but his gait was slow: it had assumed the uncertainty of an aimless stroll. His looks seemed to pierce the darkness and discover at every step objects from which he could scarce tear himself afterward: it was a tree, a bench, the pedestal of a statue or of a gigantic vase; it seemed as though each corner were a souvenir, and each souvenir a friend.

A steep slope led him, through a labyrinth of evergreens, to a part of the garden which was called *The Wood*, and where nature had been left almost wholly to itself. Here and there, however, small clearings contrived among the

dark masses of the spruce-trees admitted the doubtful light of a starry night on small patches of lawn. The young man had been following for a few moments one of the paths that meandered beneath the leafy vaults, when the sound of voices reached his ears, so distinct, so close, that those who spoke could not be more than ten steps from him. He stopped short; then groping through the thicket, he discovered, seated upon a semi-circular grassy bank to which the path led after a sharp turn, the elegant outline of a female figure wrapped in a hooded mantle. Near her, leaning against a tree, stood a man of small stature who was leaning slightly forward to speak:

"It is unreasonable and ungrateful of you," the unknown was saying in a gently caressing accent; "you know how busy is my life, and in what manner; I have great, terrible duties: were I to neglect them you would be the first to blame me, or else you have greatly changed. And how can you expect me not to be forgetful at times, with such things in my head? . . ."

"Yes," interrupted the woman in a voice choked by emotion or by prudence, "yes, but you will never deceive me, will you? You do not, you cannot know what I suffer when such a thought enters my brain. . . ."

"Come," repeated the unknown, "this is mere trifling. I do not recognize you there; you, the intrepid heart, the brave soul, you allow yourself to be cast down by such puerile presentiments!"

"You would recognize me quick enough, if you were ever to betray me, Fleur-de-Lys!"

"Indeed I would; it is for that reason that I love you, my proud girl, that I love you tenderly."

These words and the tone in which they were uttered

seemed to restore some confidence to the woman; she abandoned her hand to the man she had called Fleur-de-Lys, and began speaking to him with passionate vivacity, but so low that she could only be heard by him. Hearing a noise in the thicket, she rose suddenly, and grasping her companion's arm, she murmured in a voice vibrating with suppressed terror, "My father!" At the same instant, another sound struck their attentive ears; it was like the sharp click produced by the cocking of a fire-arm. The woman was unable to suppress another gesture of alarm; she concealed her face in her hands and held her breath.

After a few seconds of anxiety: "Come, my dear child," said Fleur-de-Lys, "it's nothing. Night and the woods are filled with such unaccountable noises." And at the same time he started across the path. As soon as they had passed by him and disappeared in the darkness, the stranger, whom chance had made a witness of this mysterious scene, left the shelter he had sought behind the huge trunk of a spruce-tree, and bringing down the hammer of a pistol he held in his hand:

"It is not my sister!" he said. "Tis she! I must wait."

X.

“Quick! a chair and a plate. . . . To the health of the commander.”—MOLIERE, *Le Festin de Pierre*.

DURING that same evening, some twenty guests were gathered at supper in the dining-room of the Chateau de Kergant, a vast hall wainscoted in oak up to the very ceiling. Mademoiselle Andrée de Pelven occupied with more grace than majesty the right of the Marquis de Kergant, while the canoness held her brother's left with more majesty than grace. Mademoiselle de Kergant, severe and smiling as a young queen, was seated opposite the marquis, glancing with discreet solicitude over the circle of guests, and resuming from time to time her observations by orders given *sotto voce* to some lackeys in scarlet livery who stood behind her.

The lackeys, as well as their scarlet livery, may seem rather out of place, in the midst of a flagrant civil war but the canoness Eleonore was in favor of keeping up rank to the last extremity; she had found much fault with the unfortunate queen on account of certain breaches of etiquette, which had been, according to her judgment, the principal cause of the French Revolution; she admired greatly the Roman Senators awaiting the enemy seated on their ivory chairs; and the scarlet livery of her lackeys, obstinately kept up at her own private expense, seemed to her a worthy match for that heroic trait of the ancients. There was the same decorum and the same spirit of dis-

play in the rest of the service : the brilliantly lighted table was covered with silverware and valuable china ; it was served with that excessive abundance which was then as now peculiar to provincial habits.

If the marquis and his sister had succeeded in flattering their memories and deceiving their regrets by this pomp and parade borrowed from better days, their success went no further than the *mise en scène* of the repast ; the actors by no means seconded the illusion : more than one among them wore the coarse jacket of a peasant ; hands madë callous at the plow handled the emblazoned silver. The marquis called heroes, and rightly so, those rustic guests whom a few years before he scarce acknowledged as men. Thus, that revolution which the old gentleman fought desperately outside had gained a foothold at his domestic fireside ; he treated it nobly at his family table ; the foremost of its boons prevailed there, the only social equality that is not the vision of a utopist or an ignoble dream of envy, that which brings together at the same banquet of honor every virtue, every talent, and every courage. The plebeian coif of Alix, the game-keeper's daughter, shone at one end of the table, and added a graceful detail to all these contrasts. M. de Kergant, a generous spirit when his natural disposition was not warped by passion, had desired to reward by this favor the devotion which the girl had manifested towards her companions in exile. The punctilious canoness could hardly close her eyes to the fact that such a medley of habits and costumes was fatal in the extreme to pure classic traditions ; she felt in the innermost recesses of her heart the blow which such a discordance struck to her scarlet lackeys, but she consoled herself by attributing a

religious coloring to this mortification: she compared these mixed gatherings to the agapes of the early Christians.

The conversation was quite in keeping with the general style of the entertainment, and became more gay and more animated as the supper progressed. The mirth was at its height, when M. de Kergant suddenly saw his daughter rise, then stand erect and motionless, with pallid cheeks, and eyes fixed with an expression of stupor towards the entrance-door. Half the guests had at the same time turned their looks in the same direction with an expression of extreme surprise, and even of alarm. M. de Kergant glanced around hastily, and discovered near the door Major Hervé in his republican uniform, bare-headed and unarmed. The marquis rose; Andrée had uttered a scream.

“Monsieur le Marquis,” said at once Pelven, whose grave and gentle features were slightly altered by fatigue and emotion, “I have come to crave your hospitality. For reasons which you can easily guess, there is no longer any safety for me in the republican ranks. Warned in time of the fate that awaited me, I thought it would be madness rather than courage not to try and escape from it. If I have placed too much reliance on your old friendship, sir, I shall go and drag elsewhere a miserable existence which is no longer acceptable to that terrible cause to which I had made so many sacrifices.”

All the guests had listened to the young officer's words in gloomy silence; all eyes were riveted upon the marquis, whose features had lost their transient expression of cheerful good-nature to resume the character of noble severity that was habitual to them. “Monsieur de Pelven,” he said, taking a step towards his unexpected

guest; but instead of going on with the solemn phrase which this beginning announced, he grasped suddenly the young man by the hand, and clasping him to his breast:

“Herve,” he exclaimed in a tender voice, “my son, my child, be thrice welcome!”

This reception, which Hervé had not dared to hope for, moved him to the depths of his heart. As he received the old gentleman’s warm embrace he felt a freezing chill running through his veins. The thought of the double part he was playing for the first time in his life crossed his mind like a remorse, and while he stammered the words gratitude and devotion, a deeper glow colored his bronzed cheeks; but his eye having suddenly met the flashing look of the individual who sat on Mademoiselle de Kergant’s right, he recovered immediately all the firmness of his resolution.

In the meantime, the marquis had turned towards his guests:

“Gentlemen,” he said, “here is the son of the Count de Pelven. He has been carried away towards revolutionary ideas by the enthusiasm of youth that led some of our greatest names astray at the deceptive dawn of these days of mourning. I have no doubt that he has long since acknowledged and deplored his illusions. Circumstances of which you are aware have just shattered the fetters which a mistaken feeling of honor had forged for him. I beg you to receive him as a brave man and the son of my affection.”

The guests answered with a hearty cheer accompanied by the loud click of glasses; one alone, the very one who, notwithstanding his youth, seemed to be the first among them, merely bowed with polite gravity.

Hervé, at the invitation of the marquis, had taken a seat by the side of Andrée, who was overwhelming him with her transports, mingled with laughter and tears. Mademoiselle de Kergant, more reserved or more keensighted, had bestowed upon the companion of her childhood no evidence of welcome save a sad and cold smile ; the glances she cast stealthily upon him appeared fraught with a sentiment of doubt and anxiety.

An awkward silence was gradually succeeding the tumultuous agitation of which the arrival of the republican had been the occasion. Mademoiselle de Kergant's remarkable neighbor had alone retained his air of easy superiority ; he was endeavoring, with a solicitude full of good taste, to revive the conversation which the presence of a hated uniform seemed to have chilled on the lips of the assistants. The tone of his voice, of a melodious and slightly metallic sonority, struck Hervé's memory. The young officer understood at once that he had before him that mysterious chief, the enemy and the rival he had come to seek, the royalist hero who had in such short time carried so high the fame of his *nom-de-guerre*. He scrutinized him with deep and sombre curiosity. He was a man of the smallest stature compatible with grace and manly beauty ; he might have been from twenty-five to thirty years of age ; black hair encompassed his broad and lofty forehead ; his mouth was somewhat effeminate, but this slight weakness was more than compensated by the proud brow, the bold lines of an aquiline nose with somewhat expanded nostrils, and above all by the almost dazzling lustre of his eyes.

Pelven fancied that he recognized in the physiognomy of the unknown some of the characteristic features of

an illustrious family ; but he owed to his patrician education details too precise and minute on the *personnel* of the house of Bourbon not to see at once that none of the names attributed to the young chief by public opinion could possibly belong to him. Whoever he might be, however, his attitude and manners were those of a sovereign : no one seemed to question his right to act as a prince, and he used it with an assurance tempered by the most exquisite politeness. His words ran like a flame around the circle of guests, rapid, affable, persuasive, penetrating the rudest as well as the most cultivated minds, fitting a jest or a compliment to the taste and the habits of each with wonderful flexibility of tone and language. Every fascination, every kind of success seemed promised to that gifted nature which united a sort of voluptuous grace to the imposing attraction of strength, and who spoke with the same eloquence to soldiers and to women. However, that rich medal could not fail to have its reverse : a delicate judge would have been shocked at the very brilliancy of so many resources and qualities thrown out, as it were, without reserve, and which might suggest a doubt as to anything remaining behind. It seemed more natural to accept this young man for a master than to take him for a friend.

Hervé could not help starting when he heard his name spoken by him who was the object of his eager attention, and to whom we shall hereafter give his surname of Fleur-de-Lys :

“ Monsieur de Pelven,” he said, raising his glass, “ will you allow me to drink to the fortunate accident to which

we are indebted for the advantage, highly appreciated by us, of possessing you?"

"Monsieur," replied Hervé making an effort to smile, "unless I am very much mistaken it is to you that thanks should be returned, if, however, there be any thanks due at all."

"Mon Dieu! Monsieur le Comte," replied Fleur-de-Lys in an earnest and affectionate tone, "unless I am very much mistaken myself, you do not quite forgive me the liberty I took of disposing of your services without your consent."

"Ma foi, Monsieur," said Hervé gayly, "I confess that I have not forgotten a certain blow . . ."

"Ah! thank Heaven! I haven't that on my conscience. George, I beg of you, my friend, do assume the responsibility of your own doings. I don't want your fist to stand between Monsieur de Pelven and myself. There is the guilty man, my dear count," added the young man, showing to Hervé a sort of square-shouldered and round-headed peasant, whose loose cravat displayed a herculean neck. "You'll forgive George, I am sure, when you see him in action."

"Excuse me, Monsieur le Comte," said George with a low laugh, "the safety of us all was at stake, and besides, a blow with the fist is no disgrace."

"I don't say it was a disgrace, my friend," rejoined Hervé, "but it hurt me. I suppose, Monsieur George, that you were one of the ladies who were washing their clothes that night in the valley of Groach? May I ask you, without indiscretion, the object of that amiable masquerade?"

"Ah! don't speak of it!" said Fleur-de-Lys; "these

Bretons are brave to madness! they got up that piece of nonsense for my reception, and it gave us no little trouble."

"And may I know, Monsieur George," rejoined Hervé, "in virtue of what witchery you succeeded in receiving our fire with impunity?"

"Ah! monsieur," replied George, "my boys are cool in action, you see. I have trained them to charge against artillery by throwing themselves down flat on the ground, from time to time, to let the grape-shot pass over. . . . You saw with what precision they executed that manoeuvre."

Mademoiselle de Kergant rose from the table as the intrepid partisan concluded these words; she took the hand which Fleur-de-Lys offered her, and all the guests followed them into an adjoining parlor, decorated with family portraits. While the company, scattered in groups throughout the room, indulged in one of those expansive conversations which usually succeed a hearty meal, Hervé withdrew into the deep embrasure of a window. He had scarce been there a moment, when he saw Bellah approaching with a smiling and absent appearance, dropping a few words here and there to the bystanders, but changing her tone and her countenance as soon as she was close to him:

"What have you come here for, Hervé?" she said rapidly and in a whisper.

"I call upon God to witness," replied the young man, "that I would have suffered the most ignominious death rather than to set my foot here, if I could have suspected what I was to see and to hear."

"Is this a riddle, Monsieur de Pelven?" asked Bellah with that haughty calm which was one of her charms.

"I was in the spruce-wood an hour ago, Bellah!"

"In the spruce-wood?" repeated Mademoiselle de Kergant, replying to Hervé's accusing glance with a look of virginal limpidity. Her father's voice calling her cut short that explanation; the girl shrugged her shoulders slightly, raised her beautiful eyes to heaven, and went off with a pensive air.

When we wonder at the ease with which a man of sense permits himself to be deceived by the woman he loves, we forget the natural tendency of our heart to hope. A single word, a gesture of surprise, had been sufficient to almost entirely overcome in Hervé's mind the evidence which but a moment before had seemed irrefutable to him. He remembered the proud and innocent soul of his adopted sister, he still saw the pure light of her eyes, and he reproached himself already having insulted, on mere suspicion, a creature worthy of his respect. And yet that scene in the spruce-wood was a positive reality. At the very moment when this recollection was exciting fresh pangs in Hervé's heart, a woman grazed, as she went by, the curtain behind which he was half concealed; he looked up and recognized Alix's pale and energetic face. However unlikely might be the idea which this vision suddenly suggested to the young man's mind, he greeted it nevertheless as a confirmation of his doubts and his hopes; but as he again turned his attention to a group in which both Bellah and Fleur-de-Lys figured, Hervé was able to satisfy himself that if the young royalist hero had not as yet all the claims he supposed to his hatred, he at least neglected nothing to obtain them.

It was easy to see that Bellah's presence lifted him above himself, and that he was striving to please her; it was to her that his eyes dedicated each one of his words; he displayed to her all the wealth of his imagination; he surrounded her with all his prestige as within a magic circle. Bellah, whatever might be the depth of her impressions, was evidently under the charm of that fascination; Hervé even read in her eyes a sort of passionate admiration that roused up at once all his doubts and all his anger.

Remembering the real object of his journey to Kergant, he regretted not having yet laid aside his assumed rôle and keeping his mask longer than necessary. He went up without affectation to his formidable rival, and availing himself of a moment when the latter had ceased speaking:

"Monsieur," he said to him, "may I crave the favor of a brief conversation with you before binding myself forever to the cause which you so worthily represent? I am certainly not in a position to set a price upon my services, but my character among you needs to be clearly defined, for your satisfaction as well as for my own, and I may add, for my honor. I believe I am not mistaken, sir, in attributing to you all the authority necessary to decide without appeal everything that concerns me."

The piercing eye of the young royalist had not ceased, during this speech, to study attentively the features of the speaker; a peculiar smile appeared on his lips as he replied:

"I am wholly at your command, Monsieur de Pelven, and you do but anticipate my own wishes. . . . The weather is fine, I believe; . . . will a stroll through the

garden suit your convenience? We can chat there quite at our ease." Hervé bowed. "But, *mon Dieu!* my dear friend," added Fleur-de-Lys, addressing the Marquis de Kergant, "are we treating M. de Pelven as a prisoner? I see that he has no sword; that is for a brave soldier like him quite an undeserved mortification, and which will not last a minute longer, if you'll have any consideration for my request."

"You remind me, *Monsieur le Duc*," said the marquis, "that the moment has come to restore to Hervé a part of his inheritance from which I have deprived him thus far."

While speaking, the Marquis had gone up to a console, and taking up a sword that lay upon it, he presented it to Hervé:

"My dear child," he added, "this belongs to you; your father's sword could only arm a faithful hand. I hand it to you, trusting that it shall never be turned against our holy cross and our sacred fleur-de-lys."

At the last words the young duke smiled again.

"I'll warrant you in behalf of M. de Pelven," he said, "that your confidence is not misplaced . . . and that it comes just in time," he added in a lower tone, turning on his heels and going towards the door.

Pelven buckled on the sword, thanking M. de Kergant with that rather cold reserve which had characterized, since his arrival, all his conduct towards the marquis, and which the latter attributed to the natural embarrassment of this compulsory return. After which he followed Fleur-de-Lys out of the parlor.

The two young men passed through a vestibule hung with old armors, crossed a bridge thrown over the moat, and

soon reached the garden. By a tacit agreement they kept on walking rapidly, as if they could not find a sufficiently lonely spot for the explanation that was preparing, the nature of which both seemed to have fully appreciated. As they were approaching the spruce-grove, the sound of hurried footsteps was heard behind them. They stopped, and the next moment Mademoiselle de Kergant overtook them.

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen," she said in a panting voice; "Monsieur Hervé, I must speak to you."

Hervé could not suppress a gesture of impatience.

"Pray excuse me, mademoiselle," he said; "but you heard the request I addressed to Monsieur . . . Monsieur le Duc; he was kind enough to grant it, and he would have the right to question my courtesy were I to defer . . ."

"Monsieur Le Duc," interrupted Bellah with vivacity, "is too courteous himself to refuse to yield me his turn."

"Most assuredly," said Fleur-de-Lys in a constrained tone that was not usual with him, "Mademoiselle de Kergant cannot expect of me anything but absolute submission to her least wishes; but Monsieur de Pelven would be unjust towards me if he thought he were the only one annoyed by this delay."

Bowing low after these words, the young chief left the place and disappeared in the depths of the wood. Mademoiselle de Kergant walked a few steps back into the garden, until she was quite sure that her words could only be heard by him for whom they were intended.

"Hervé," she said then, stopping and touching his arm, "it must not be; it cannot be!"

“What do you mean?” replied Hervé; “you are certainly mistaken as to my intentions.”

“No more so than he has been himself; but it shall not be, no, not if I have to go for my father and tell him everything. Do not drive me to such a dreadful extremity, Hervé, I beg of you.”

“Such an extremity is quite unnecessary, since you may, with a single word, remove all wish and all reasonable pretext on my part to carry the matter further; but listen to me: if you refuse to speak that word, I swear to you that there will only be left for you to surrender me to death with your own hands, for you know your father. Bellah, the woman I saw an hour ago, near by here, in that young man’s arms . . . that woman,—come, speak!”

Mademoiselle de Kergant staggered; she went to lean against the pedestal of a statue, and remained for some time downcast and silent; her breathing was quick and painful; at last she spoke, without raising her eyes.

“I was that woman!” she said, in a smothered tone.

“You! you! powers of heaven!” exclaimed Hervé, stepping back with a look of terror. “And so,” he resumed after a brief pause,—“yes, I wish to hear it again from your own lips,—and so he is your lover?”

Bellah hid her face in her two hands, and her voice, faint as a sigh, murmured: “Yes, my lover.”

“Very well! Farewell!” said Hervé.

“Where are you going?” rejoined Mademoiselle de Kergant, grasping Hervé’s hand with a wild gesture; “what is to become of you? what do you wish? what am I to tell my father?”

“Tell him I had come here as a spy, load me with the

vilest names, it matters not ; your lips can no longer cast disgrace on any one. Farewell !”

As he uttered this last word, Hervé shook off gently the hand that held his and walked off rapidly, while Bellah fell distracted on her knees before the pedestal, her hair untied and her bosom rent with sobs, the image of a suppliant at the foot of an antique altar.

XI.

“Vous m’êtes en dormant un peu triste apparu ;
J’ai craint qu’il ne fut vrai, je suis vite accouru.”

LA FONTAINE, *Les Deux Amis*.

PELVEN cleared the ditch that divided the garden from the adjoining meadow, and returned into the avenue through a gate in the fence to which his horse was still fastened. The poor animal, forgotten amid so many cares, uttered a feeble neigh on recognizing his master, and stretched forward his tired head to implore a caress. Every man has experienced in the course of his life one of those hours of ingratitude when a manifestation of affection on the part of the humblest being penetrates our souls and renders keener the thought of our loneliness. When our hearts are full, it takes but little to make them overflow.

Hervé, murmuring a few indistinct words, petted with his hand his old companion in perils and battles, then he sat down by the roadside and two tears fell from his eyes. After a few minutes given to bitter meditation, the young man rose and drew himself up proudly as if to face his destiny. There is at least this good in the certainty of misfortune, that it removes all pretext for these alternatives of hope and fear which enervate the soul. In whatever direction Hervé turned his thoughts, it met but grief, obstacles, and a sort of impossibility to live. The past and the future both failed him at once ; the dreams of

noble activity, of services rendered, of glory conquered, all the manly consolations from which a man may seek forgetfulness for useless weakness and quiet for a rejected heart, all was denied him. Against all prevision, his mad enterprise had saved neither his love nor his honor, and yet it had left him his life. Alone in this hostile country, what hope could he now entertain of reconquering by some glorious deed the esteem of his friends? Equally suspected by both parties, a traitor in the eyes of one or the other, where could he go now? Under what tent or in what hut could he shelter even for a night his head, threatened by the vengeance of both camps?

Absorbed in these blind reflections, the young man had reached the extremity of the avenue, when his ear was suddenly struck by the measured cadence of a military march; before he could place himself on guard, he was surrounded with bayonets and felt the point of a sword on his breast:

“Surrender, whoever you may be!” said a brief and imperious voice.

“Francis!” exclaimed Pelven.

“Hervé!” replied the little lieutenant, drawing back his sword and grasping his friend’s hand. “Hervé! Heaven be praised! I had lost all hope of finding you alive.”

“Francis!” repeated Hervé at the height of surprise, “what means this?” Where are you from? . . . How have you been able? . . . Who have you there?”

“We,” said a harsh voice, “the Fearless band, Colibri and myself, who have come to seek our commander or death, on account of the moral effect.”

“Ah! my old Bruidoux,” rejoined Hervé, “you don’t believe I am a traitor, then?”

"Nonsense, major! didn't we all swallow the Scotch-woman trick? all but Colibri, who has a remarkably keen scent for his age."

"But in the name of Heaven, Francis," interrupted Hervé, "how have you been able to follow so close on to me, and to penetrate thus far? Where is the general? Where is the army?"

"A little farther off than I would like, major. But before all, tell me what progress you have made in your adventure; did you succeed in getting into the chateau?"

"I did, and I found those I was looking for. But beyond that, I failed completely and cruelly. Ask me no more. Now advise me of what has taken place, for I know not as yet whether I must rejoice at this meeting or not."

Francis, having then taken the major aside, told him that during the very night that followed his departure the republican army had struck camp; the main body was already at Ploërmel; three battalions, among which Hervé's command, had even pushed forward as far as the little deserted town Pelven had passed through in the morning. There was a rumor that the forces of the Whites were concentrated a little farther north, at Pontivy. The general, anxious for Hervé's safety, had enjoined Francis to do all in his power to rescue their mutual friend, should an opportunity offer to do so without excessive imprudence. Francis, finding himself within three short leagues of Kergant, had determined to advance that far by a night-march. He had taken with him some sixty men, made up principally of those who had formed the emigrants' escort. Under shelter of the darkness, the little troop had met with no obstacle through that de-

served region. Francis inquired then of the young major whether the chateau had a numerous garrison, and whether they were not running the risk of being surrounded. Hervé replied that he had seen no trace of garrison either in the chateau, or in the vicinity, that there seemed to be no suspicion as yet of the approach of the republican army, and that some fifteen royalist officers had just quietly taken supper there. He added a few particulars as to Fleur-de-Lys individually, whose real name he thought was not such as to justify the apprehensions of the general-in-chief. "And now, what do you expect to do?" Hervé added.

"Why, really, major, if such is the case, we cannot dispense laying hands on that nestful of rebels. The capture of Fleur-de-Lys would be equivalent to a victory."

"That is impossible!" said Hervé quickly.

"Impossible! Why so? Nothing is more simple, on the contrary, according to the very information you have just furnished me yourself; and unless I am greatly mistaken, it must be a sad neglect of our duty not to avail ourselves of it."

"Do you pretend to teach me my duty, sir?" exclaimed Hervé.

"Major Hervé!" said the young lieutenant in a tone of painful surprise.

"Well, yes, . . . yes . . . I am wrong, a thousand times wrong, it's true," replied Hervé, whose agitation was extreme; "our duty here is indeed evident, incontestable; but how can I lend a hand to this violence, which may perhaps end in bloodshed,—and against whom? Against my father's friend, the protector of my child-

hood? How can I go and collar this old man in his own house, in the very house where he treated me for so long as his own son? That is impossible, Francis! And these women? Must I arrest them too? And that young man himself, whoever he may be, does it behoove me to take him prisoner? No, all this is odious, impossible, I repeat . . . and at the peril of my life I shall neither do it nor suffer it to be done."

"I trust, major, that I can show you the necessity under which we find ourselves in a less unpleasant light. The general foresaw what might occur if I found you at Kergant; his instructions meet all your scruples. He enjoined me first of all to arrest no women; concerning M. de Kergant, as his name has not yet been openly compromised in the hostile acts which have broken the treaties, the general will leave him free to cross over into England. You see that by using the great advantage chance has placed in our hands, far from injuring M. de Kergant, we will really prevent him from consummating his own ruin; for this desperate war cannot fail sooner or later to destroy both himself and his friends." Hervé made a sign of acquiescence. "And as to Fleur-de-Lys," added Francis, "he is not a Bourbon, you say?"

"I am convinced of it."

"In that case, whoever he may be, he will only be a prisoner like any other of the same class. The general pledges himself to treat them as if they had voluntarily surrendered; they will merely be detained until the end of the war."

"I cannot but believe you, Francis," said Hervé, "and, it being so, I cannot but express a wish for your success in the very interest of those whom I once loved so much.

Go, then, and do as you think best; but in my present situation I have no right to command your men, even if I wished to do so. Do your duty, I tell you; as to myself, whether I am doing mine or not, I will not follow you."

Francis, though evidently annoyed at this resolution, feared lest further objections might seem dictated by an after-thought unworthy of him, and without adding a word he ordered his men to fall into line; but Hervé suddenly changed his mind. It appeared to him that in abstaining from taking part in the drama that was preparing, he was yielding to a sentiment of weakness rather than to a genuine point of honor. His presence might at least mitigate the effects of a catastrophe now become inevitable; his age and his rank would inspire a degree of confidence which might be refused the young lieutenant; it depended upon him, perhaps, to prevent bloody scenes from desolating that almost paternal abode, the home of his sister. Hervé communicated these thoughts to Francis, and declared that he would accompany him, but that he left him the command and the entire direction of the enterprise, merely wishing not to be absent himself.

The little troop then started again. They made a halt before the lateral fence that marked the centre of the avenue; thanks to Pelven's friendly disclosures, the young lieutenant had long had in his mind a detailed plan of Kergant; he ordered Bruidoux to cross the meadow with twenty grenadiers, to scale the garden through the breach, and to occupy on that side the entrance to the chateau. The old building, surrounded on all sides by water, had no communication with the outside save the two bridges

which had taken the place of the drawbridges, one of which gave access to the garden, and the other to the court-yard. Every means of escape was therefore now closed to the marquis and his guests. In the meantime, Pelven had removed his horse's saddle and bridle, and had turned him loose to graze in the meadow.

Reduced to some fifty men, the republican column continued to advance cautiously towards the chateau. Such was the perfect security in which the occupants of the building were lulled, that the soldiers reached the head of the bridge without interference. The gate was open; some ten or twelve steps led to the threshold of the vestibule. Francis, leaving one half his men in the court-yard, walked rapidly up the steps accompanied by Pelven and followed by the rest of the grenadiers.

Two or three lackeys who stood in the vestibule, struck with amazement at this sudden invasion, attempted no resistance. Francis, having made sure that Bruidoux occupied the post assigned to him, gave orders to commit no violence, but to allow no one to go out; he then started through the rooms that preceded the parlor, the lighted windows of which he had noticed from outside. The young lieutenant, through a scruple which it is unnecessary to explain, took all these measures without addressing a single question to Hervé; the latter still followed him like his shadow. In the main hall, where the supper had taken place, they found the game-keeper, Kado, who, at the sight of the bayonets, stood dumb and with gaping mouth, as if petrified.

"Kado," said Hervé, breaking the gloomy silence he had hitherto maintained, "no noise, no useless struggle! The chateau is occupied in force."

"Good Lord!" murmured Kado, "is it possible, Monsieur Hervé! you! it is you who . . ."

"Silence! You had better join me to prevent greater disasters. Every one's life shall be safe. Who have we here?" pointing to the adjoining parlor.

"The ladies, all the poor ladies . . . and M. le Marquis."

"The others?"

"The others have all gone except M. George and . . . O Lord! Master Hervé, is it possible?"

"And Fleur-de-Lys?" said Hervé.

The game-keeper was wringing his hands in despair.

"If the lieutenant will permit," Hervé went on, "Kado will precede us, out of consideration for the poor women."

"Walk in, Kado," replied Francis.

Kado seemed to hesitate; then, on a significant gesture from Hervé, he opened the parlor-door. He stopped on the threshold, casting an uncertain glance over the circle of frightened women, as if unable to find words; at last, with the voice of a judge uttering a sentence of death:

"The Blues!" he said.

The two republican officers, bareheaded and with their swords in the scabbards, entered the parlor at once.

"Gentlemen," said Francis, "the chateau is surrounded. You are my prisoners."

A moment of silence followed this declaration. Andrée, on seeing her brother, had lifted her arms with a heart-rending expression; her head leaned over her shoulder, and then the innocent victim sank gently, like a flower mowed at the base. Hervé ran to support her,

but Bellah anticipated him : with the help of Alix, she laid upon an arm-chair the inanimate body of her adopted sister, and wheeled it to an open window.

Pelven turning then towards the marquis :

“Monsieur,” he said, “this misfortune is not my work ; I was unable either to foresee or prevent it. I dare not hope that you will do justice to the sentiment that prompted me to witness the poignant trials which I expected. I only wish to tell you that I have no power, no right here save that of prayer. I beg you, sir, not to aggravate by a useless resistance the blow that strikes you. Rely on this young officer’s word ; he has the entire confidence of the general-in-chief.”

“And who will guarantee me your own word ?” said the marquis.

“Speak, Francis,” rejoined Hervé, “and above all, respect those who cannot reply to an insult.”

Pelven then moved off to one side, and stood motionless against the wall, as if resolved to take no further part in what was going on.

“Gentlemen,” said Francis in his turn, after beckoning to the soldiers to leave the parlor, “I should have hesitated to take charge of this expedition, had not the general’s generosity greatly lightened its burden. Here are the terms he has authorized me to offer you.”

The young lieutenant then informed the royalist chiefs, who listened not without repeated manifestations of surprise, of the respect he had been recommended to observe towards the women, and of the leniency with which Hoche expected to treat the prisoners.

“I must warn you, however, gentlemen, that our general has not the necessary powers to dispose at his pleas-

ure of a member of the ex-royal family: you alone are able to say whether this restriction affects any one of you."

Francis having ceased to speak, the marquis held a brief consultation with his two guests. It was Fleur-de-Lys who then replied to the republican officer.

"On the part of your general, sir, no magnanimous deed can surprise us. We are aware that his engagements are equal to facts. Unfortunately, we also know that there is above him a power that may compel him to open his hands, bound though they may be by his word, and tear his captives from him. Now, this is a chance which we must positively decline to run. Here, Kado!"

The game-keeper, in answer to appeal, came to stand by the side of his master.

"Am I to understand, sir," said Francis, "that you entertain the insane thought . . ."

"Of defending ourselves, yes, sir! The struggle will be an unequal one, we know; but soldiers deprived of their leaders do but poor work."

While speaking thus, Fleur-de-Lys deliberately placed his naked sword under his left arm, and drew from inside his coat a pistol, which he cocked. His three companions imitated his example at once. At this threatening moment, Mademoiselle de Kergant and the game-keeper's daughter fell on their knees near the chair, upon which lay Andrée still senseless. Francis fell back a step, drawing one of the pistols he carried in his belt: a furrow appeared on his brow, betokening gloomy anxiety, and he cast a furtive glance at Hervé; but the latter, leaning against the wall, his arms folded across his chest, preserved the same calm and apparently indifferent attitude.

Meantime, the grenadiers who were in the adjoining room, attracted by the click of steel, were again crowding the doorway.

"Stand aside, lieutenant!" exclaimed one of the soldiers, "you'll keep us from firing."

"Gentlemen," said Francis again in a changed voice, "I conjure you once more, if you have any humanity, any feeling of pity for these unfortunate women . . ."

"George," interrupted Fleur-de-Lys with terrible vivacity, "you may answer the gentleman." Then suddenly taking position himself in front of Hervé: "Major Pelven!" he went on, "in the name of Heaven, defend your life!"

Hervé shook his head slowly but did not stir. Fleur-de-Lys moved a few steps back; a strange smile curled his lips, displaying his fine white teeth and imparting to his countenance an almost fierce expression; he raised his pistol deliberately; but suddenly his hand dropped as if stricken with inertia, and the weapon fell upon the floor. A sound wholly unaccountable at that critical hour, the sound of a sonorous and prolonged laugh, had at that moment suspended every threat and chilled every heart.

"That's my sister!" said M. de Kergant in a whisper, in the midst of the deep silence that had succeeded the tumult of approaching battle. All eyes followed anxiously the direction pointed by the old gentleman's trembling hand; the canoness, standing in the embrasure of a window, seemed gazing intently outward; she kept on laughing, but at intervals her laugh broke into sobs. Suddenly, she turned towards the bystanders, and staggering forward a few steps towards her brother:

“Why don’t you laugh?” she said. “Have you never seen a wedding? As soon as the fiddlers come we must dance; . . . they won’t be long, for the groom is young and has not far to go. . . . These gentlemen are doubtless invited? Jean, give some seats. . . . What a lovely night! We would be better outside to dance . . . and then, there is no air here . . . no air . . . what is it? *mon Dieu!*”

The old lady’s voice died away in a frightful rattle; her head fell back, she uttered a sharp shriek, and fell stiff and stark in her brother’s arms.

As if paralyzed by the impression of this cruel scene, republicans and royalists followed all its details with pitying eyes, forgetting their quarrels and their dangers. The energetic countenance of George himself showed evidences of irresolution and discouragement. Fleur-de-Lys exchanged a few rapid words with the rude partisan; after which, shrugging his shoulders with an air of resignation, he advanced towards Francis:

“Here are my arms,” he said; “this is enough misery for one night. We are ready to follow you. M. de Kergant will not contradict me, I am sure.”

The marquis, turning his head slightly aside, made a sign of approbation. Francis expressed politely the regret he felt at having been the occasion of this domestic calamity: it was a real grief for him to increase it further still by tearing M. de Kergant away from such legitimate cares; but he could not delay his departure a single moment without being remiss to his duty. He announced at the same time that Fleur-de-Lys, George, and the marquis would alone be compelled to accompany him; that the other inhabitants of the chateau would be at liberty to

remain in it, but that they would be prisoners for a few hours, for he would have the bridges broken after leaving, in order that the alarm might not be spread throughout the country. The young lieutenant concluded by giving orders at once to the men to tear down the garden bridge.

During these explanations, the canoness had recovered her senses; but her strange and incoherent answers to her brother's anxious questions showed that disorder still prevailed in her brain. The very gentleness of her insanity might create fears lest it were permanent. In another part of the parlor, Andrée, hanging to her brother's neck and resting her head upon his breast, was giving free vent to her silent grief.

Noticing that Fleur-de-Lys and George were already in the adjoining room, M. de Kergant turned hurriedly towards Francis:

"Shall I be free to see my family, sir?" he said.

"I have no doubt of it, sir."

"Well, then," rejoined the marquis, "it is needless to bid them adieu;" and he left the parlor in haste. Pelven, without uttering a word, had lifted Andrée in his arms and laid her on the sofa near which stood Bellah. Before going out, he fixed his eyes upon Mademoiselle de Kergant, pointing to his sister's helpless form; then he went to join Francis, who had gathered all his men in the vestibule.

Kado, who did not wish to leave his master, followed the detachment outside the chateau with the other three prisoners. While the soldiers were throwing into the moat the boards that formed the bridge, Francis requested Fleur-de-Lys to give him his word of honor that he would

not attempt to escape. Fleur-de-Lys replied laughingly that, on the contrary, he gave it to him that he would do everything in his power to that effect.

"I am sorry for that, sir," replied Francis; "you compel me to exercise a strict and merciless surveillance." The double line of grenadiers closed at once around the prisoners, and, as an additional precaution, each one was placed in the special charge of a soldier, who received rigid orders. These arrangements being completed, the column started down the avenue.

Lieutenant Francis, rather proud at heart of the success of his expedition, and relieved of the chief anxiety it had caused him, marched at the head with cheerful step, breathing serenely the cool night air, and slashing the bushes with his sword. Hervé, wrapped in his cloak, advanced at his side with more thoughtful gait. At the end of half an hour, they reached the banks of a small river running from west to east, on the left of the road followed by the detachment.

"If I am not mistaken, major," said Francis, "this river is the one that flows through the town where our advance battalions are quartered. You must know all this country at your fingers' ends."

Hervé replied that he was not mistaken; that the road which followed the river led directly to the little town which he had himself passed through in the morning, and that indeed the recollections of his childhood enabled him to retrace in his mind the least features of that region.

"But," said Francis, "it seems to me you might assume command again now."

"No, indeed, my dear Francis, you acquit yourself too

well for that. You have managed this whole affair in the most creditable manner."

"Mon Dieu! major, chance favored me much more than . . . than . . . at any rate, thank Heaven, all is over as happily as possible."

"I wish it may be so," said Pelven.

"What! have you noticed anything suspicious?"

"What do you think, Francis, of the old lady's sudden insanity?"

"It was assumed, think you?" exclaimed Francis.

"Perhaps it was part real and part assumed; women have that singular faculty; but until we have safely arrived, I shall fear that her crazy fit was the means of communicating some mysterious advice."

Hervé interrupted himself on seeing suddenly a feeble and fugitive light flickering on the leaves of the trees that bordered the road.

"What is this?" said Francis, going up to the men.

"Nothing, lieutenant," replied Bruidou; "the prisoners lighting their pipes."

Francis ascertained that there was indeed no other cause for that interruption; George and Kado, still enclosed within the ranks of the escort, were indulging in the innocent pastime of smoking. In the depth of the obscurity, the two little glowing furnaces cast an intermittent light over the group of captives.

The young lieutenant joined Pelven again. The road which the column was now laboriously ascending wound between the base of some thickly wooded hills and the almost perpendicular banks of the river.

"I am sorry," said Francis, casting an uneasy look around, "not to have taken the other bank. I don't like

the looks of this defile, and then, I don't know if my ears are ringing, whether it be the murmur of the river or the sound of the wind; but don't you hear a sort of agitation? . . ."

"Forbid the prisoners to smoke!" said Hervé quickly.

Francis turned to issue this order; but before he had gone one step, a triple explosion lighted with a sudden flash the hills and the road; at the same time, an immense shout rose on the heights that overlooked the pass. Three of the men who guarded the prisoners had fallen; George knocked the other down with his fist, and rushed headlong like a mad bull in the direction of the hill, breaking the line of grenadiers and opening a passage for his companions, who disappeared behind him in the depths of the thicket. A new storm of shouts burst forth, but subsided at once. A few random shots fired by the republicans had had no effect.

The scene of this unexpected attack had been selected with ripe judgment. It was the highest point of the defile; a short distance ahead, the road was blocked up by a black and moving mass which had rolled down from the hill like a torrent; at the same time the vague murmur that still came from the heights like the sound of a stormy sea revealed the fact that they were still occupied by considerable forces. The republicans were lost if they took a single step backwards under the threat of this double hostile line. Hervé's first thought was to march ahead and cut his way through this living barrier at the point of the bayonet; but he calculated that before overtaking it, he would have lost two-thirds of his men under the plunging fire from the hills; and so the order was not given.

On the side opposed to the woods, the road expanded in a semi-circle, forming a sort of narrow promontory over a rocky cliff, the base of which disappeared in the water some thirty feet below. On this little cape a few trees with dense foliage and a thicket of thorny bushes added their shades to those of the night. It was under shelter of this impenetrable darkness that the grenadiers had sought refuge in disorder in the first moment of surprise. Penned up within that little space, with the abyss behind them and an invisible enemy in front, they waited in silence.

"Lieutenant Francis," said Hervé, loud enough to be heard by the men, "I resume command!"

"Good!" murmured Bruidoux, "I am glad to hear it. Not that I haven't proper respect for the lieutenant, who is a famous bit of a man; but here, by thunder, we want a whole man or never!"

Hervé ordered the soldiers to form in three lines facing the road; then, approaching the extreme edge of the cliff and leaning over the precipice at the bottom of which the river tumbled and foamed, he seemed to examine with extraordinary attention the steep slope of the bank. He then returned to take position by the side of Francis on the flank of the detachment.

"Drowned or shot, I suppose?" Francis asked briefly.

"Hush and listen," said Hervé.

Fleur-de-Lys' ringing voice had just risen from the thicket.

"Major Pelven," he said, "you hear me, do you not?"

"Yes, sir," replied Hervé, stepping forward into the road in front of his men.

"You are surrounded, sir," rejoined Fleur-de-Lys.

"With the forces at my command, I can destroy you all to the last man without losing a drop of blood on our side, and I shall certainly do so if you compel me to. We know your courage and your devotion to your duty; but duty must stop in presence of impossibility. You had better surrender at once."

"In the position where I find myself, sir," replied Hervé, "I can only answer after consulting my lieutenant; will you give me time to do so?"

"Go on, sir," said Fleur-de-Lys. "We are in no hurry."

Hervé going back to the young lieutenant, led him back in haste to the edge of the cliff.

"Listen to me well," he said, amid the soldiers' religious attention: "we must pay those fellows back the joke they played upon us with their laundresses; all we have to do to save our lives and our honor is what I have done twenty times myself out of pure bravado, on this very spot. Thanks to the darkness, our movements in this corner of the ground must be wholly lost to the enemy. You see that recess in the rock? it is only a somewhat steep stairway with roots for balusters, leading about two-thirds the way down the cliff; once there, you will find a perpendicular surface as smooth as a table; slide down boldly; you'll fall on a narrow sandy ledge at the foot of the cliff; enter the river opposite the vertical rock and walk across; there is a ford there; the water will reach your knees, probably your waist, if the river is high. Let every man keep his place until his turn comes. The sergeant will see that no man begins the descent before the preceding one is out of sight. As to myself, I shall negotiate as long as possible

to gain time. Come, boys, steady, now! the lieutenant will show you the way. Hold on to the roots, Francis!"

Francis attempted to reply; Hervé dryly ordered him to obey. The next moment the youth had disappeared on the declivity of the precipice. One of the soldiers followed almost at once. This strange operation and this sudden prospect of escape had restored good-humor among the grenadiers. Bruidou, kneeling on the edge of the rock, accompanied each departure with some jesting words of leave-taking: "A pleasant journey! My compliments at home, my dear! Remember me to her, my boy! Don't waste your time on the way, you! Take care you don't get your feet wet, citizen! Write when you get home; eh, Colibri?"

Although this singular plan had required but a few moments to be explained and to receive a commencement of execution, Hervé feared to excite distrust by longer delay; he ordered Bruidou to advise him whenever the front rank remained alone on the esplanade; and then returned to stand in the centre of the road.

"Well, sir," he said, "here is what I can propose: I'll surrender at discretion myself, and my lieutenant, with his men, will be allowed to join his corps without molestation."

"You cannot mean that seriously, major," said Fleur-de-Lys. "When we have everything in our hands, we cannot be satisfied with only a part, important and precious though it may be."

"I am obliged to you, sir," said Hervé, glad of an opportunity to protract the formalities; "I am obliged to you on my own personal account; but if you show yourself too exacting, you may not get the best of us as easily

as you think. It is not wise to drive an enemy to despair, weak though he may seem."

"I repeat, sir," rejoined Fleur-de-Lys in a more threatening tone, "that your proposition cannot be entertained. Have you nothing further to say?"

"What terms will you grant us if we surrender?"

"Your lives, provided you engage to serve under the King's banner."

"Your King to the devil!" murmured Bruidoux, who had just touched Hervé's arm. "Major," he added, "there is only the front rank left."

"Have the men make ready to fire," said Hervé; and falling back a few steps: "Monsieur Fleur-de-Lys," he said, "those terms are disgraceful: we must refuse."

"Hallo, there, boys!" shouted Fleur-de-Lys at once in a thundering voice; "fire on the esplanade!"

A broad belt of flame flashed from the hillside, and a formidable explosion woke up the echoes of the valley. By the rapid light of that discharge, the *chouans* saw plainly the first republican line, and could not suspect the disappearance of the others. Pelven had foreseen that terrible chance, but relying on the uncertainty of firing in the dark and the scattering of his men behind the trees, he had preferred running that risk to allowing the enemy to guess too soon the secret of their escape. Three grenadiers only had fallen.

"Fire! my boys," said Hervé, "and save yourselves."

The republican platoon fired back, and then made for the river-bank with commendable celerity. Bruidoux persisted in staying by the major's side, but he received the imperative order to follow his comrades.

Hervé left alone in the midst of a cloud of smoke that

made the darkness darker still, turned towards the hills, and raising his voice: "Gentlemen," he said, "we are ready, my lieutenant and myself, to surrender at discretion. . . ."

"Shout 'Long live the king!'" replied Fleur-de-Lys; "shout, I beg of you, for you are a brave one after all!"

"Hervé cast a rapid glance behind him; fancying he still saw two or three shadows standing on the edge of the rock, the intrepid young man faced the enemy once more and tried to speak again:

"In order to save the rest of my men," he said. . . .

"Shout 'Long live the king!'" repeated Fleur-de-Lys. "No? Well, then, fire!"

Another explosion followed. Pelven heard the storm of bullets whistling around him, but he escaped unhurt. The flash, however, had revealed that the esplanade was vacant.

"What means this?" exclaimed Fleur-de-Lys angrily. "By all the saints! they are escaping!"

"Yes, sir; and 'Long live the Republic!'" said Pelven, waving his sword in the exaltation of danger and triumph; and he rushed down the path that had safely carried all his companions. Before he had reached the base of the cliff, numerous shots were fired over his head, and fragments of stone fell in a shower around him; but he fell safe and sound on the beach by the water's edge.

A few moments later, a loud cheer rising from the opposite bank informed the *chouans*, who were now occupying the summit of the cliff, that Major Hervé was in safety in the midst of his men.

Before Pelven had even set foot on the shore, Francis had grasped his hand with effusion. After waiting for a

few moments in order to make sure that the Whites, frightened at the difficulty of the passage, had given up the pursuit, the little republican troop started at a rapid gait across the fields.

XII.

*“My Father: Really, Trim, I am much pleased with you.
Doctor Slop: And I too.”*—STERNE.

THE republican army, after the forced marches that had brought it to Ploërmel, remained there inactive and uneasy, with its arm uplifted over a solitude. Reconnoissances pushed in force in every direction had failed to discover the army of the Whites, or even to obtain reliable tidings of its whereabouts. But among the rumors prevailing through the city, that which the general had received with the greatest incredulity affirmed that the royalist army had taken refuge in the vast forest of Nouée, which stretches five leagues northwest from Ploërmel. It was difficult to imagine that a victorious army, having control of the whole country, should have deliberately retreated into the depths of a forest, retaining, of all its conquests, only the most indifferent if not the most dangerous position. Yielding, however, to the public voice, the general resolved to reconnoitre in person, with a strong detachment, the approaches of the suspicious forest. What he saw and heard left him no doubt as to the enemy's presence.

He returned to his head-quarters more anxious than ever; for the object of such an incredible manœuvre escaped all his conjectures. A few spies who had ventured into the mysterious forest had not returned.

Four days elapsed in the midst of this indecision; the

republican army had its lines extended over a space of three leagues, from Ploërmel to the river we have already several times referred to, and to the little town that guarded its passage. For the better understanding of the facts which are about to follow and bring this narrative to a close, we beg the reader to fix well in his mind the relative position of the three points upon which we will endeavor to draw his interest: Ploërmel to the east, Kergant to the west form the two sides of a triangle of which the Forest of Nouée towards the north marks the apex.

On the evening of the 22d of June, two personages of the most pitiful aspect were slowly wending their way towards the southern extremity of the forest: one was a beggar attired in nameless rags and walking with no little difficulty, owing to an injury to his knee, and to the further fact that he was blind. The other was a girl whose height might have seemed unusual for a woman, had not its proportions been marred by fatigue and perhaps also by poverty.

The sun was already declining on the horizon, when the wretched couple stopped at the entrance of a path that disappeared through the forest. The heat was overpowering; not a breath of air stirred the leaves; at intervals, dull and prolonged roars rolled through the atmosphere, and swarms of crows flew from tree to tree, uttering screams of alarm.

"I have been something of a sailor once, my pretty girl," said the ragged old man, "and I can tell you that we shall have a nice squall to-night."

The "pretty girl," who really was about the least attractive person of her sex, made no reply, but seemed

a prey to painful anxiety. The old beggar, drawing his companion by her cape, made her sit by him on the grass, and spoke to her for some minutes, apparently favoring her with his paternal instructions. After this conference, the worthy man rose resolutely, and entered the timber, leaning on the arm of his guide.

They had not walked a hundred steps, when suddenly three men, dropping from the adjacent trees like ripe fruit, stood in the way; at the same time, ten or twelve individuals armed with guns came out of the thicket and surrounded the adventurous couple.

"Who are you? where are you going?" said the one who seemed to be the head of the ambushade.

"Eh! daughter," said the blind man, "there are no Blues here, are there?"

"No, father," replied the girl in a tremulous and wheezy voice, "they are all good ones; you can talk; can't he, gentlemen?"

"Let him talk," said the *chouan*. "We'll listen."

"Let me first touch your clothes," said the old man, passing his hand over the *chouan*'s breast, "for my poor eyes have long been out of this world. A heart and a cross," he added, "that's good. . . . Long live the King, my boys! Where is Fleur-de-Lys,—may St. Yves and all the saints protect him!—where is he? I must speak to him."

"Fleur-de-Lys has no time to waste, my old man."

"And he will waste none with me, my good fellow, I warrant you. Take me to him; I have something for him, something that has passed under the very nose of the Blues."

The old man began laughing, and, thrusting his hand

among his rags, he took out a carefully sealed package of letters: the envelope was stamped on one of the corners with a peculiar sign in the shape of a cross and fleur-de-lys. The chief of the *chouan* squad hesitated no longer; he told the two adventurers to follow him, and started through the mazes of the forest.

After a march of half an hour, during which they were frequently stopped by posts with whom they had to exchange the countersign and were compelled to climb over more than one barricade of trees and branches, the guide informed the old beggar that they were about reaching the end of their laborious journey; at the same moment, he left the depths of the thicket where it was not prudent, he said, to walk another step, and he entered a sort of corridor some six or seven feet wide over which twisted and interlaced branches formed a sort of ceiling: under this continuous vault the feeble rays of the twilight could scarcely penetrate; the deep silence that prevailed in this part of the forest rendered more striking still the impression of this sudden darkness. The blind man felt his companion's hand shivering in his.

"What is it?" he said in a whisper, while the guide walked some few steps ahead. "What moral effect are you experiencing about this time?"

"Sergeant!" replied the girl in the same tone, "my mind is disturbed, and at times I feel weak."

"That is a bad moral effect!" rejoined the old man; "come, my boy, be a man and. . . . Here! what the deuce is this machine? A cannon, 'pon my word! Infernal forest! I never saw such a perfect old curiosity-shop . . ."

The old beggar muttered the rest in an inaudible voice. The guide had stopped ; he was questioning in a distinct tone two sentries posted at the extremity of the strange avenue ; the last gleams of the twilight enabled them to distinguish, in a large circular space, a number of huts and tents symmetrically arranged. Several covered pathways similar to the one they had just followed gave access to the clearing, which was otherwise enclosed on all sides by an inextricable growth of timber.

The guide and his two companions penetrated within the clearing, and stopped in front of a hut, around which a strong guard was posted. The guide entered alone, but in a few minutes he returned for the old blind man and his daughter, and brought them into the presence of Fleur-de-Lys.

The young leader, standing behind a table, was talking to George ; two men in clerical garb were writing at a corner of the table ; a few officers were scattered in small groups over the space extending from the table to the door. All conversation ceased on the appearance of the beggar : his daughter led him face to face to the chief and then drew a few steps aside, making several awkward curtseys. The old man, with his package of letters in his hand and his body bent forward in an attitude of respectful humility, seemed to wait until he should be spoken to ; Fleur-de-Lys turned the light of a lamp upon the mysterious messenger, and after scrutinizing him minutely from head to foot :

“Where do you come from,” he said, “and who sent you ?”

“I came from Normandy, general. M. de Frotté sent

me in a carriage as far as Fougères; I passed through the enemy's lines to bring you this package."

"Ah! you are a Norman?" said Fleur-de-Lys. And he addressed him rapidly two or three questions in Norman patois, which the old beggar answered promptly in the same language. Satisfied on that point, Fleur-de-Lys opened the dispatch. After glancing over the letters it contained, he picked up the envelope he had thrown on the ground, and examined attentively the broken seal; after which he fastened for a moment his sparkling eyes on the blind beggar with an expression of anxiety; but the calm and venerable countenance of the worthy man seemed to dissipate at once the cloud that had darkened the young chief's countenance. He sat down at the table:

"You'll be compelled to start again this very night, my poor old man; but I'll see that you are amply paid for your trouble. At the inn of the *Pommier Fleuri*, half a league from Plélan, you'll find one of M. de Frotté's agents, who will spare you the remainder of the journey. If you love the King, allow yourself to be cut to pieces before surrendering the note I am going to give you."

While uttering these words, Fleur-de-Lys had been writing a few hasty lines. The letter being duly folded and sealed, he handed it to the old man across the table, without saying a word. The latter held out his hand to take it.

"Ah! ah! my friend, you are not blind then!" exclaimed Fleur-de-Lys, drawing back his hand quickly. "Hola! the King's boys, treason! Arrest the spy and his daughter."

At the sound of Fleur-de-Lys' voice, half a dozen soldiers rushed into the hut; but the officers had already mastered the sham blind man and the girl, after a brief resistance, which George's powerful arm had soon brought to a close. The beggar's wooden leg, his gray beard, and his daughter's red hair had fallen off during the struggle.

"Your name, comrade?" then said Fleur-de-Lys, addressing the elder of the two prisoners.

"Bruidoux, Sergeant of Grenadiers, Battalion of the *Fearless*."

"You know the laws of war, and you are aware what fate awaits you. Have you anything to say?"

"For myself, nothing; for this boy, I have to say that I persuaded him against his own wishes into this expedition, and that if you let him off with his life it would be an easier matter for me to die myself, in my own person. That's all."

"Impossible, comrade. Nevertheless, we may still come to an understanding: will you enlist in the King's service?"

"Why not in the Pope's service?" said Bruidoux gravely.

"And you, young man?" said Fleur-de-Lys, turning to the other prisoner.

This question was followed by an interval of silence, during which Bruidoux's face became gradually contracted until it assumed an expression of unspeakable anguish.

"The sergeant is my superior, sir," the young captive murmured at last in a feeble voice; "he has spoken for both of us."

At these words the old sergeant's features gave way to

a sudden emotion ; his eyes rolled in their orbits, and a tear trickled down his bronzed cheek.

“It’s a pity,” rejoined Fleur-de-Lys, “for we like brave hearts. Remember, I do not ask you to betray your country. We serve France as you do, and better than you do. Come, I give you an hour more to reflect, for I should be sorry to lose you. Benedicite,” added the young chief, turning to one of the soldiers, “take them to the vacant hut at the end of the camp ; let them be securely bound, and keep close guard over them. If they have not changed their minds in an hour, have them shot. It is unnecessary to come to me for further orders on this subject. Besides, I shall no longer be in the camp at that time.”

Benedicite, a grim-looking old *chouan*, led the prisoners to a small hut somewhat isolated from the rest, situated at the extremity of the camp, and built against the trunk of a gigantic oak. This shanty had no windows, the disjointed boards of a rude door being sufficient for the purpose of ventilation. There the two republicans were left lying on their backs in the centre of the hut, their arms and legs bound with stout cords. Benedicite returned in a few moments, and setting down a small lamp in a corner :

“This is your time-piece,” he said. “When you see it on the point of going out, your hour will be over.” And he went out after this warning.

“Here is, my boy,” said Bruidoux, “here is an adventure which is not exactly rose-colored. Besides, that rascal has driven the cords into my flesh. I did not complain, it being incompatible with my dignity as a citizen ;

but I am afraid you have been treated no better, my poor Colibri."

"No, sergeant," replied Colibri; "but what does it matter now?"

"I understand what you mean," replied Bruidoux in a voice that seemed altered. "Hem! hem! I must be catching cold here. . . . But here is the fact, Colibri: I feel a moral effect that is choking me clandestinely, and all on your account; for it was I—yes, it was I—who brought you into this infernal den. Upon my word, Colibri, I thought I was doing the very best thing in your own interest. . . . And now I want you to tell me, my boy, whether you . . . well, yes, I must say it . . . whether you forgive me, yes or no?"

"I do forgive you with all my heart, sergeant," replied Colibri; "I knew you meant it for my good, though we have not succeeded."

"You are a brave fellow," said Bruidoux, whose voice became quite husky; "and since you sent the *ci-devant* prince to grass, you may boast of possessing my esteem, though I don't very well see of what use it can be to you hereafter."

"And so, sergeant," said Colibri, "you think there is no more hope?"

"Hem! my boy, I beg your pardon; there is always hope as long as our body is not reduced to dust. But as to say that our position is a brilliant one—no, no. It is certain that the enemy has obtained a considerable advantage over us—an advantage that seems decisive—for I should not like to deceive you in a moment like this."

A flash of lightning suddenly shone through the cracks of the door, and a solemn roll, sounding a moment after,

announced that the storm which had been brewing all evening was about to burst over the forest. Almost at the same instant the door creaked on its rusty hinges, and the prisoners knew that they were no longer alone; but owing to the painful attitude in which they were maintained by their fetters, they were unable to see who had come to interrupt them in that supreme hour.

"The lamp is not out," said Bruidoux dryly. "It is not right to cheat an enemy in adversity."

"Not so loud, Mister Sergeant," said a manly but suppressed voice.

"I know that voice," murmured the sergeant. "Who are you, my friend?"

"Kado."

"Ah! the father of the little citizen with the top. Have you come to save us, old fellow?"

"Don't speak so loud, I tell you: the door is wide open, and the sentry is passing before it every minute."

At that very moment the soldier on guard stopped in front of the door.

"The prisoners," said Kado, "wish me to help them change position."

"Do so," said the soldier; and he resumed his walk.

Kado got on his knees and leaned towards the captives, drawing from his sleeve a knife whose keen blade gleamed under the rays of the lamp; in two strokes he severed the cord that bound the sergeant's wrists and ankles. "On your life," he said, "don't stir!" Going next to Colibri, he freed him from his fetters with the same dexterity and the same promptitude. That operation over, the gamekeeper got up and stood in front of the prisoners; then he began speaking to them—now

with grave deliberation, and again hurriedly—modifying the tone of his voice and the meaning of his speech according that the sound of the sentry's footsteps seemed nearer or farther from the door.

“You have barely half an hour, now.—The King is a kind master.—You must not think of leaving the camp through three lines of sentries; besides, you'd inevitably fall into the hands of some of the outposts in the forest.—You'll have good fellows to serve with.—Here is your only means of salvation: in ten minutes the storm will be at its height; and when the noises from above fill the woods, rise.—Yes, Fleur-de-Lys promises to each of you an officer's commission.—I leave you my knife, here, under the straw; use it to cut through the straw over your head, at the spot where the trunk of the oak passes through the roof; then climb through the opening.—The King's cause is the cause of God: it must triumph.—The branches of the oak extend over to the adjoining thicket; the thicket is full of traps: you'd surely perish there.—There is no shame returning into the honest path.—But the lowest and strongest limb forms part of the network that covers the nearest pathway; follow that branch as far as the vault, and then crawl over the trellis as best you can.—I am sorry; it is a sad ending for brave men.—When you reach the end of the vault, get down; you'll find the little fellow you saved from being shot.—Farewell, then, if you will have it so.”

“What have they decided?” inquired the sentry, entering the hut.

“To die,” replied Kado. “Let us leave them alone. Good-night, comrade.”

"Here is the rain," rejoined the soldier. "I am going to stay under shelter here until the hour is up."

"As you please," said Kado; "still, if you were in their position, you wouldn't like to have any one prevent you from conversing at your ease with a friend."

The soldier yielded reluctantly to this objection and went out with the game-keeper. As soon as the door had closed behind them Bruidoux heaved a deep sigh, which Colibri repeated like a faithful echo.

"Well, my boy," said the old sergeant, "this is a most fortuitous occurrence. What do you think of it?"

"Extremely fortuitous, sergeant."

"There is a beautiful maxim, Colibri, which says that there is no small bush but casts a shade. Who could ever have ventured to believe that this boy with the top would take me one day under his protecting shade—me—Bruidoux? No one—not even you, Colibri, though I am pleased to acknowledge in you henceforth every quality of the heart and the mind."

"But, sergeant," inquired Colibri, "did you understand a single word of the citizen chouan's complicated system?"

"I understood it from top to bottom, my child, and I am going to devote the tedious minutes which the benumbed condition of our muscles compels us to spend on these premises, to make it equally clear to you."

While Sergeant Bruidoux was calmly explaining to his subaltern the plan of escape suggested to their coolness and their audacity, the flashes of lightning became more frequent and more dazzling; the intensity of the storm was gradually reaching its height. Soon the deep and distant murmur of the tempest changed into a wild con-

cert of deafening roars and shrill howls, to which was mingled the pattering of a torrential rain; the door of the hut shook and moaned under the shock of the gusts of wind, and the water penetrated in streams over the threshold. Suddenly, a clap of thunder louder than the rest rent the air and seemed to burst the last shackles that confined the elements; a furious blast caused the huge oak that formed one side of the hut to rock and shiver to its very roots.

"Now is the time, boy," said Bruidoux, rising resolutely.

He grasped at once the game-keeper's knife, and with the help of the keen blade soon cut an opening in the roof next to the trunk of the tree; the wind rushing through this fresh outlet blew out the lamp.

"Courage, boy," said Bruidoux; "I will not forsake you."

At the same time, he raised himself to the top of the roof, and grasping the oak with one arm, he held out the other to his companion to assist him in his escalade.

"Here is the tree," said Bruidoux in a whisper; "but I don't see the branch; do you?"

Colibri made no reply. Bewildered by the darkness, blinded by the hurricane, panting with anxiety, they both felt in vain with their trembling hands the gnarled bark of the oak.

"Ten thousand millions!" the sergeant went on; "there is no more branch than in my eye, and the extinguished lamp is going to betray us!"

As he spoke, a double flash furrowed the gloomy depths of the sky, and revealed to the fugitives the limb they were looking for; it started from the trunk some two

or three feet below, and stretched horizontally through space.

"Follow me," said Bruidoux; "hang on to my rags and stride the branch until we reach the end."

The limb bent under their weight; but sustained at its farther extremity by the network of the vault, it did not give way. They had scarce begun their aërial journey when the cry "To arms! to arms!" sounded behind them. "Steady, boy, keep up your moral!" murmured Bruidoux.

A few seconds later the two fugitives had reached the top of the covered way, and they were crawling on their knees over this roof of verdure, when the sound of voices and hurried steps apparently coming in their direction stopped them motionless and dumb; a squad of armed men, running and brandishing torches, passed under their feet. As soon as the light of the torches had disappeared, they renewed their journey with silent haste. Suddenly a hoarse groan escaped from Colibri's lips. The sergeant looked around:

"What is it, child?" he asked.

"My foot has slipped through the branches, sergeant, and I can't pull it up again."

"Is that all? Pull hard, and no child's play now."

"Impossible, sergeant, I cannot follow you; but go on alone, I will not . . ."

"Don't insult your superior. I'll help you; wait."

"All is lost, sergeant," rejoined Colibri, putting his lips close to the sergeant's ear and speaking in a scarcely audible voice. "Some one is holding my leg."

Bruidoux grasped the young man's hand without replying. A mortal minute elapsed; then a gentle and frail voice murmured from below:

“Is that you, Monsieur le Sergent?”

“*Vive le bon Dieu!* it’s the little boy,” exclaimed Bruidoux, drawing a long breath. “Yes, we are here, my love. All well at home? Wait only a couple of rapid moments and we are with you.”

While talking, the old sergeant had succeeded in extricating Colibri’s leg; he jumped into the thicket, passed into the road, and clasped the game-keeper’s son to his heart.

The little boy, guiding the fugitives through the thickest bushes, led them without accident to the outer edge of the forest. Bruidoux parted from him only after kissing him again and promising to return him his top at the first opportunity.

XIII.

“Sa présence en ces lieux m'est toujours redoutable.

Il est puissant, il m'aime, et vient pour m'épouser.”

CORNEILLE.

At the moment when the two republican captives were effecting their escape with such good luck, a young officer of the Catholic and Royal army was crossing the forest alone, in the direction of the west; he walked with rapid strides, indifferent to the roar of the tempest, and shaking from time to time, with an absent air, the water from his cloak.

The sentinels he met at frequent intervals hastened, after the exchange of a few words, to give him the military salute, and having been recognized by the vacillating light of a camp-fire as he was passing a considerable post, he was at once surrounded by a respectful throng that mingled their enthusiastic shouts of welcome to Fleur-de-Lys to the thousand noises of the storm. Several similar ovations stopped more than once the royalist general during his progress through the forest.

We must now partly tear the veil from that young head which enjoyed popularity approaching adoration. This personage had first appeared in Vendée at the end of the great wars. Extraordinary fortune favored his arms, and not a single combat could be named in which it had betrayed him. But his very success and popularity had not been long in exciting uneasiness and apprehension among

the exiled princes. He was soon made to feel his dependent position, and otherwise embarrassed in his movements. It was at this time that peace negotiations with the Republic were opened. The lucky adventurer refused to participate in them, and sailed from Brittany in a fisherman's boat. Before leaving the shore, he broke a golden fleur-de-lys that surmounted the handle of his sword, and gave it to the faithful friends who were assisting at his departure. This relic soon became in the popular legend the name of the missing hero.

When a few weeks later hostilities were about to be resumed and the British cabinet had decided to land, on the coast of Brittany, a division of emigrants commanded by one of the brothers of the late king, it was felt that Fleur-de-Lys alone was capable of preparing the success of this movement by gathering the scattered fragments of the old *chouan* bands and sweeping from the coast the republican detachments. He accepted the task. In one brief campaign, he accomplished, as we have seen, the object of his mission; but the English fleet failed to appear at the stated time. Fresh instructions were forwarded to Fleur-de-Lys, to which he complied by modifying his plans and withdrawing from the vicinity of the coast.

Nevertheless, this delay, which was not without some semblance of treason, had deeply wounded the young general's impetuous soul; he felt himself half sacrificed as a reward for his devotion. Some indiscretions of language that escaped him in a moment of anger aroused distrust around him. A few of the chiefs remained sincerely attached to him, while others felt secretly alarmed at his growing ascendancy, fearing lest it might lead to some ambitious project of personal advancement.

We shall soon see how far these apprehensions were founded.

Fleur-de-Lys, on reaching the edge of the wood, found a strong party of cavalry camping there, took a horse, and started at a gallop towards the Chateau de Kergant. The marquis and his party had found shelter in the forest of Nouée during the day which followed the surprise of the chateau by Francis. They heard the same day that the republicans had occupied, but almost immediately evacuated, Kergant, falling back upon the main army. The marquis, wishing to spare to his family until the last moment the fatigues of a proscribed existence, had resolved to return with them to his hereditary manor. Fleur-de-Lys undertook to keep up a surveillance that would hereafter make all surprise impossible. The secret plan of the chouans was, moreover, of a nature to bring this precarious situation to a speedy termination.

All the habits of family life had been resumed at the chateau. Nevertheless, cruel preoccupations were revealed in the words, and still more in the silence of each. Bellah had fallen into an alarming state of languor; Andrée herself only smiled in her dreams now. On the evening to which the course of our narrative has now brought us, the various members of the family had parted as usual at about ten o'clock.

Bellah, after retiring to her room, had remained standing, with one hand laid on the back of a chair, her neck bent forward, gazing on the vacancy; she seemed to listen with melancholy interest to the sounds of the storm outside, and the gloomy echoes with which it filled the corridors of the old chateau. The girl's handsome features were deeply altered, but her very pallor and the dark

furrow under her eyes did but restore to her the only charm of her sex in which she was wanting : the charm of weakness.

Starting at last from her listless attitude, she came to sit in front of a small table that formed the base to an elegant bookcase of carved ebony. She took from a shelf a thick book handsomely bound in velvet and fastened with a cross-shaped clasp ; but she pushed it back slowly without having opened it ; then, shaking her head with a painful expression, like one who cannot resist a desire of which he disapproves, she tore a leaf from an album, and began writing with feverish rapidity. This is what she wrote :

“Hervé, my brother, I never expect to see you again. Your scorn,—undeserved though it be, as God knows,—is nevertheless killing me. Already you would find it difficult to know me. They think around me that it is fatigue, excitement ; I let them believe it, but in fact I am dying. I feel as though my heart were broken. My mind is also in a state of confusion. This evening’s storm completely upsets me. It seems to me that each gust of wind is passing through me, and tearing away a little of the life I have left. Should I be mistaken, should I live, you would never read these lines. And so, enough on this subject.

“Hervé, I have been during my whole life a slave to duty, and in obedience to it I have voluntarily cast disgrace upon myself ; but I mean that my grave at least shall be pure to the eyes of all, and above all to yours. When I am no longer alive, it can hurt no one that you should weep over me, my friend ; and the thought is so pleasant to me in my present condition ! There cannot

be much harm in the weakness that prompts me to write to you, for my conscience hardly objects, and yet it is still my same poor conscience of other days,—you remember Hervé,—my sensitive's conscience, as you used to say. . . . Where are those days, *mon Dieu* !

“When my own lips were acknowledging my shame, you doubtless believed me, you must have done so. But what ! so readily, Hervé ? In that very dwelling so long common to both of us, where my soul had been revealed to you fold by fold, one word has been enough to obliterate so many recollections that should have defended me ! Ah ! it seems to me that on the day of eternal justice and inexorable truth, if I were to hear an admission of infamy or baseness escaping from your lips, I should wait, before I believed it, until God's own voice had repeated it to my ear ! And you did not doubt, you did not hesitate ! Does one word, a word of slander, outweigh so easily in your hasty judgment the testimony of a woman's entire existence ? For I spoke falsely, since I am compelled to tell you so. I have no excuse to offer for this falsehood, Hervé : the errors which duty command are raised to the level of virtues.

“I must explain all, since you no longer know me. I have remained faithful, passionately faithful to the sentiments and the ideas with which our childhood has been nurtured. I believe in the King as I believe in God. This double faith alone sustains my conscience ; outside of it, I see nothing but darkness and difficulties among which I could not live. Indifference is a word of which I cannot apprehend the meaning. An ardent faith, Hervé, in times like these, imposes duties which I confess are greatly beyond a woman's strength.

“It rested with me to prevent the catastrophe I felt impending between this young man and yourself. I was bound to do so at any cost. There is no existence that should be more highly prized than that young man’s existence, by all who love the King. The King! Hervé, that is a name which you have ceased to understand as we do, and you will scarcely understand now how it may explain every sacrifice.

“I was so far from being guilty, Hervé, that I was unable at first to understand what you referred to. It is strange that you were willing to believe me so easily! I wished to save that young man’s life: it was my duty; but I must not, while justifying myself, allow your suspicions to rest upon another. Alix, whom you know, has since spontaneously revealed to me something which has explained your error to me. She came to ask me to speak to my father in favor of one of our young officers she expects to marry: he is the son of M. de Monryon’s game-keeper. She confessed to me having met him in the spruce-wood during that fatal evening, and dreaded much to have been surprised by her father. The man she loves has a *nom-de-guerre* which may have contributed to deceive you so singularly; he calls himself *Fleur-de-Genêt*.

“This, it seems to me, is all I had to tell you, and I now feel more at ease. If you ever read these words, my dear friend, it will be because I have ceased to live. It is a thought that removes many scruples from my mind. If I am anxious that my memory shall remain dear to you, Hervé, it is because I deserve it, rest assured of that. . . . I have struggled long on your account. God has made us masters of our acts and our words, but not of the

promptings of our hearts. Did you really believe me guilty? I had certainly decided to remain a stranger to you, and since our interview on the Rocky Moor you were right to think that I was, and could no longer be anything to you but a recollection of the past; but to turn my soul towards another, to profane the tomb forever sealed at the bottom of my heart, to lay my widowed hand in another man's hand! O God! . . . ”

As Bellah wrote that word, looking up to Heaven to call it to witness, the door of the room opened, and Fleur-de-Lys walked in. Mademoiselle de Kergant rose with a shudder. The young man had stopped near the door in a respectful attitude.

“Monsieur le Duc,” she said, with somewhat haughty gravity, “my father is still in the parlor, I believe.”

“Pray excuse me, mademoiselle,” said Fleur-de-Lys; “it is to you alone that I wish to speak. You may well think that no ordinary matter could have prompted me to a step that seems to offend you. I am on the eve of a supreme resolution, and I must consult you without delay.”

Mademoiselle de Kergant looked anxiously at Fleur-de-Lys' countenance; she was unable to read there anything but a vague expression of violent perplexity. Falling back upon her seat in a state of extreme agitation:

“What is the matter, sir?” she said.

Fleur-de-Lys meditated for a moment before replying; then drawing nearer to the attentive girl:

“You do me justice, at least,” he said; “I am sure that you do. You know whether I have given myself wholly to the perilous duty which had been assigned to me.”

“I know,” interrupted Bellah, “that you have been worthy of your blood, Monsieur le Duc.”

"The patience, the abnegation of a man have their limits, however," rejoined the young man. "Woe to those who forget it, to those who cause devotion to hesitate in the most faithful souls!"

"Those are strange words! What are you contemplating? *mon Dieu!*"

"If I have not yet learned treason, Bellah, it is not for lack of lessons. You already know, at least in part, what has taken place; but nothing must remain obscure to your eyes. I had been commissioned to disperse or destroy everything that might prove an obstacle to the long-promised landing of troops. Within a few days after my arrival, I had accomplished my task; the sea-shore, the whole country were free, we had full control of the coast, we were ready to join hands with our friends and our allies; but they came not, and left us face to face with one of the most formidable armies, with the best general of the Republic . . ."

"But you had been warned . . . new orders had been forwarded you."

"Yes, three days later. How can I tell you my anxiety during these long hours of uncertainty and neglect—my anxiety, not for myself, but for so many brave fellows who had trusted my word and whom I had led to a needless butchery. The orders came at last: I was requested to occupy the enemy during another week, or to defeat him. Such orders are easy to give; easy enough to understand, too. Whatever the result, they were rid of an enemy . . . or else of a servant more odious still. . . . I obeyed, however, Bellah."

"God and your honor demanded it," said the girl with dignity.

"That is not quite so certain to me," rejoined Fleur-de-Lys. "To sacrifice so many generous hearts (I am speaking of my soldiers) for a selfish cause, really I know not whether religion and honor commanded it! And yet I obeyed . . . I prepared to die. I threw myself into that forest, expecting to fight there a desperate battle which would doubtless have proved our destruction. But the attack did not take place, and this is how matters now stand: the English flotilla is to land day after to-morrow on the peninsula of Quiberon. If the republicans are warned they will at once march to the coast. I can follow them and force a battle; but if they still remain in ignorance, as I hope, I can try to outflank them to-night, and reach before them the place of landing."

"The hour is indeed critical," said Bellah in a troubled voice; "why not advise my father at once?"

A slight cloud passed over Fleur-de-Lys' bright countenance.

"Because," he said in a singular tone, "because I know not as yet whether, instead of adopting one or the other of these two plans, I may not at this very night leave the forest and retreat towards the north with all my *chouans*."

Mademoiselle de Kergant could not fail to see that such a manœuvre ruined at a blow the most cherished hopes of the royalists, for it removed all assistance from the expedition of the emigrants, and left them an easy prey to the republican army. Bellah's mind refused to see this frightful light.

"I beg your pardon, Monsieur Le Duc," she murmured; "I am giving you all my attention, but certainly I cannot have understood you."

"You have understood me."

Bellah rose slowly from her seat, looking at the young man with an air of profound stupor.

"It is not possible," she murmured, "that you would be guilty of treason, you ! That you would betray your fellow-soldiers, betray the prince . . . the king's brother !"

"The prince !" said Fleur-de-Lys, whose mouth curled up with a scornful smile. "The prince is not coming !"

"'Tis false !" exclaimed Mademoiselle de Kergant ; "who dare say such a thing ? Who dares say that a Bourbon breaks his word and deserts his flag ?"

"Himself !" replied the young man, laying an open letter on the table. It consisted of a single line.

Bellah cast her eyes upon it, and a sudden blush suffused her countenance.

"England must have prevented him," she murmured.

"Prevented ! with a name like his ! If England refused him her ships, was there not a single fisherman's bark left to save Cæsar's honor ? At any rate, he is not coming. As to the others, I have the means of warning them in time ; they shall not land. I betray no one, therefore, save England ; and as to her, I am proud of doing so."

"But," rejoined Bellah with energetic enthusiasm, "what matters one man ? what matters a fault, excusable, perhaps ? Is the crown less pure, the cause less sacred ? And you abandon it ! But what will you do ? What are your projects ? In whose behalf are you going to fight ? In whose name ? What tie will bind your soldiers ? Not one of our brave Bretons will follow you."

"They will all follow me !" said the young man forcibly. "Do you think that they have no interest in taking

up arms but that of the King, of that King allied to the English, the Saxons as they say, their old enemies; of that ever absent King, so lavish of their blood and so sparing of his own? No, Bellah, they will be grateful to me for ridding them of a detested alliance . . . they will all follow me, in the name of their religion, of their liberty, of their country in danger. That is the cause they serve, the cause to which it is grand, it is holy to devote ourselves: the truly French cause! Words are nothing. . . . Your mind is too lofty, Bellah, not to understand me."

"All I understand," said Mademoiselle de Kergant, fixing her stern gaze on the young chieftain's ardent eye, "is that you pretend to serve the revolution in your own way, if not to your own profit. You are powerful, Fleur-de-Lys. Your success, your influence are such that I always thought God had selected you. But beware that He does not withdraw His strength from you the moment you withdraw your faith from Him."

"Cannot God have reserved to me some other fate besides that of eternally serving ungrateful masters?" exclaimed the young man.

"Your fatal power may lead into your fault, into your crime, simple minds like those of your soldiers, Fleur-de-Lys; but do you hope to abuse our faithful nobility in the same manner?"

"A few, I am aware, influenced by narrow prejudices, will forsake me; others, I have made sure of it, will march as readily in the name of France as in that of a King who teaches them forgetfulness. I am not the only one, Bellah, whose fealty has been shaken by this fresh disappointment. I might show you proofs if you wished

it. I did not conceive such a design without some probability of success, believe me."

"What design, what success? in the name of Heaven! for indeed, this passes my comprehension and my reason."

"I am called upon another theatre of danger and honor, Bellah; the influence of my name, the help of our bands are invoked to kindle anew the great Vendean wars. Other pioneers are ready. Federalism is awakening all over France, and is lifting its hand towards us. . . . Once rid of the King, all the enemies of the Republic will be with us. The time when our insurrection had a capital, when a single victory would have been enough to open the road to Paris, to smother at one blow that Republic which was stronger then than it is now,—that time may come again. Countries are not like kings, jealous of those who serve them . . . the gratitude of the nation would certainly reward its liberators. Those are noble chances, and my soul is not base because it is attracted towards them. Since we are compelled to rush into adventures, these at least are grand and worthy of a man!"

Mademoiselle de Kergant had listened with a species of terror to that language of a soul warped by injustice, goaded on by ambition.

"I understand now," she said; "pride blinds you, Fleur-de-Lys; you are hastening on to your own ruin; but what is horrible to think of, you are going to drag us all into the abyss at the same time; you will destroy our cause forever. And I see it, mon Dieu!" she added, wringing her hands in despair; "I am warned, and yet I can do nothing, nothing to avert it!"

"You can do everything, Bellah!" said Fleur-de-Lys in

a quick, low voice, laying his hand gently on the young lady's arm.

She looked at him without replying.

"Yes," he rejoined, "there is no task I would not joyfully undertake, no bitterness, no injustice I would not bless, if I were your husband."

"My husband!" exclaimed Bellah, drawing suddenly back as if an invisible gulf had yawned beneath her feet.

"Since I have known you, Bellah, no glory, no fortune, has been of value to me, unless it drew me nearer to you. Your love would have compensated me for all else; you refused it to me; I felt my head turning. To forget you, I must become a great man or a great criminal. The passions that consume my heart are terrible; you could not understand them, you could not palliate them."

Mademoiselle de Kergant had crossed her hand over her bosom as if ready to lie down on her own tomb; her pale lips opened slightly:

"The King!" she murmured gently.

Suddenly an extraordinary expression of suffering and of triumph spread over her features and cast a halo over them. She approached Fleur-de-Lys, held out her hand to him, and said with a smile of supernatural sweetness:

"If this feeble hand is to weigh so heavily in the scales of the highest destinies, I am proud to cast it unto them."

The young chieftain seemed confused and embarrassed at such a prompt answer and such an easy victory.

"Is it possible!" he murmured; "was I mistaken, then? You do not love him. . . . you might love me? But duty alone has prompted your words. . . . You are sacrificing yourself!"

"Do I look as if I were sacrificing myself?" rejoined

Bellah with the same calm serenity. "Do not believe it. My soul is perhaps not capable of the ardent feelings you might expect from another; but it is enough that I may be yours without self-compulsion. Time will do the rest."

"Can I believe you, Bellah? Such unexpected happiness! Oh! of what a burden you have relieved me! of what mortal anguish! How can I ever repay you?"

"Serve the King, Fleur-de-Lys!"

"I will serve him; I'll die for him! and I'll die full of gratitude if I die your husband! It is cruel to importune your father at this moment, Bellah; pray forgive me; I love you as you yourself love God.—Your promise is sincere, tell me? You do not rely to release you from your engagement—this suspicion will offend you?—you do not rely upon the imminent chances of a murderous war?"

"You may dispose of my hand as my father may agree, and at any moment you please."

"What! should your father consent, the priest who is to bless our arms to-morrow night before the departure, before the battle perhaps, might also bless our union! May I hope so, Bellah?"

"The time is very short," said Bellah, whose voice was growing gradually weaker; "but see my father; I shall not gainsay what you may tell him. Go now, Fleur-de-Lys. I felt somewhat unwell this evening, and this has been quite a severe ordeal to me."

The young man bent his knee to the floor; he took Mademoiselle de Kergant's hand and pressed his lips upon it; then after bowing low once more, he left the room.

As Fleur-de-Lys reached the end of the corridor that traversed this part of the chateau, he looked around sharply, thinking that he heard the sound of footsteps behind him. No noise, however, came to strike his attentive ear; he concluded that the echo of his walk under the sonorous vault had been the cause of his illusion, and he turned into the stairway; but his ear had not deceived him: he had been followed. A woman, an angry and revengeful shadow, emerged from the darkness and walked after him down the stairs that led into the vestibule of the chateau. While he entered the drawing-room to join the marquis, she made her way into the yard and soon disappeared in the obscurity of the avenue.

A few minutes had elapsed when a sharp and prolonged scream, that seemed to proceed from Bellah's chamber, suddenly aroused Andrée, whose room was divided from that of her adopted sister by a mere partition; she rose quickly and hastened to her. Bellah, cold as death, lay stretched on the floor. The room was soon filled with all the dwellers of the chateau. While Monsieur de Kergant, with the help of the canoness, was trying to recall his daughter to life, Andrée noticed on the table the letter which the arrival of Fleur-de-Lys had interrupted. She read a few lines, anxious to discover the cause of the sudden calamity that had stricken her sister; then she seized the letter and hid it in her bosom.

During that same night, a young woman, mounted on a horse covered with foam, rode up to the republican outposts and requested to be led in presence of the general-in-chief. Since the preceding day, the latter had moved his head-quarters into the little deserted town about three leagues from Kergant. As soon as he heard the first

words addressed to him by the young woman, the general sent for Major Pelven. After a conference of half an hour, the mysterious equestrian left by the same route over which she had come.

The earliest rays of the dawning day began to whiten the horizon, and Pelven was still closeted with the general-in-chief, when they brought him a sort of half idiotic peasant who had already more than once conveyed communications between himself and his sister. The peasant handed to Hervé an envelope sealed with extreme care. It contained two lines from Andrée and Bellah's unfinished letter.

XIV.

HERMIONE.

“Allons, c'est à moi seule à me rendre justice,
Que de cris de douleur le temple retentisse !”—RACINE.

M. DE KERGANT was one of those men, worthy of all respect, whose life moves by the simple action of natural sentiments : their healthy heart feeds not that turgid spring where passions ferment. They are called positive hearts. There is no darkness in their conscience : primitive good sense and eternal morality keeps up in it a pure light which no worldly breath can cause to vacillate. They are called narrow minds. Their private life is always irreproachable ; their political life, especially during those critical periods that change abruptly the aspects of the human mind, is subject to error, never to shame. In their social intercourse they are wholly free from mistrust and hypocrisy. Such characters are transparent as well as firm. They cannot deceive, but are themselves easily deceived. Fleur-de-Lys, by surrounding his delicate communications with the usual artifices of his language, experienced no difficulty in persuading the loyal old man to forgive him a step that might perhaps seem too bold ; besides, it was not quite unexpected.

M. de Kergant worshipped his daughter ; but, as ignorant as a child of the secret mechanism of the heart and of the complicated mysteries of passion, he had never suspected that the silent indifference with which Bellah

treated the conduct of her adopted brother might conceal an unsubdued and tender recollection. Other appearances had further misled him. His paternal solicitude had become alarmed, at first, on finding in the letters which his daughter wrote him from England the expression of a romantic enthusiasm for the brilliant leader of the Breton *chouans*. He had twice seen the same feeling manifested with strange frankness in Bellah's eyes, in presence of this young man. The latter was far from taking the same views of these ingenuous demonstrations; he appreciated better the true character of the charm he exercised over the mind of the pious royalist. He knew that the tender preferences of a woman are fonder of mystery, and that a maiden whose heart has been touched takes more care to draw a veil over her wounds; but these delicate shades escaped M. de Kergant's less flexible intelligence, and he felt convinced that his daughter had allowed her whole soul to become wrapped up in the seductions of beauty, of courage, and of victory.

In his deep affection for his only child, the marquis had endeavored to bend his mind to the idea of an alliance which he believed fraught with Bellah's happiness. He succeeded without very much effort. He himself felt to a marked degree the young chief's ascendancy. He had always defended him with energy against the reproaches and the suspicions of his rivals, and had thus been gradually led by his innocent pride into giving him an almost filial place in his heart. If it were a sacrifice, in the old gentleman's mind, to sink in that ephemeral glory the name of his ancient family, this very sacrifice had something in it that was gratifying to his ideas of devotion. He saw in it a fresh pledge given to a sacred

cause, a tie that was to silence all fatal mistrust and draw the ranks of the nobility closer still around the popular hero.

Such were M. de Kergant's secret reflections. The request which Fleur-de-Lys came to make him, with Bellah's consent, was therefore kindly, almost joyfully, received: it removed doubts which weighed upon him; it afforded him a plausible explanation of the sufferings under which his daughter had visibly labored for the past few days; and at the same time it indicated the remedy. The nervous fit into which Bellah had been suddenly thrown only confirmed the marquis in his ideas and overcame his last scruples. Left alone at the bedside of the patient, he mistook the silence of despair for a confession of modesty; and for the emotion of happy love, the bitter tears which his cruel consolations forced from his daughter's eyes.

M. de Kergant undertook, during that very night, to raise the obstacles which religion might oppose to such a hasty marriage. The dispensations were easily obtained. Several proscribed priests had taken refuge among Fleur-de-Lys' victorious bands; one of them held a high rank in the church: it was he who was to celebrate a solemn mass for the success of the expedition, at the very moment of the departure of the royalist forces; he consented to bless at the same hour the union of the young general with Mademoiselle de Kergant.

Bellah was informed of this arrangement as soon as she awoke from the heavy torpor that had succeeded the violent shocks of the night. She rose, said her prayers, and then went down into the park, where she took a long, solitary walk. She was surprised to feel

stronger than on the previous day ; nevertheless, her ideas were still confused and tumultuous ; when she came to remember the letter she had begun, a keen pang of anxiety brought her back rapidly to her room. The reader knows what had become of this letter. Bellah, calling Andrée at once, asked her if she had seen it: Andrée replied resolutely that she did not know what letter she meant, and she affirmed it with such dryness of tone that Bellah dared not question her further. Mademoiselle de Pelven, as well as the other inhabitants of the chateau, had heard of the wedding that was preparing. After what she had read, she could not doubt that Bellah was yielding, against her own real feelings, to some new demand of an austere duty ; she felt for her friend nothing but respect and pity, but to manifest her sentiments would be to confess her little treachery ; Andrée, therefore, in spite of her heart, managed to keep up all day the attitude and tone of an offended sister.

The abyss of grief has no bottom for delicate souls : deep as they may be into it, they can always sink deeper still and find new sources of bitterness. It is not true of them that extreme situations are the term of misery ; as long as they live, heart-broken though they may be, they can still suffer more. Mademoiselle de Kergant felt this when to all her anguish came to be added the thought that some one, a lackey perhaps, had violated the chaste outpourings of her heart, her first, her last love-letter, that testament of her soul, that flower of her tomb. Should some more worthy hand have obtained possession of that letter, Bellah had reasons to fear that, her secret being disclosed, she could no longer be able to consummate her sacrifice, and she beheld herself the accomplice of

the irreparable disasters which her intended's despair might bring about. She spent the early hours of the day in this state of anxiety; at last, as nothing came to confirm her fears, she became convinced that her letter had been lost in the disaster, or else that the canoness had secured it, and thought proper to keep it secret.

Fleur-de-Lys appeared for a moment at the chateau during the forenoon; then he returned to the camp in the forest, where the preparations for the departure of the army detained him until night. M. de Kergant was to accompany the expedition, leaving his daughter and his sister in charge of Kado, on whom he relied to watch over their safety. Under any other circumstances, the faithful game-keeper would have reluctantly accepted a duty that separated him from his master and kept him away from peril; but all his scruples yielded to the anxiety which his daughter's impaired health caused him. Alix had indeed recently lost that youthful fire and that proud energy which stamped her countenance with such a remarkable expression; like Bellah, she seemed to have been touched by a deadly blight. On the very morning of the day which our story has now reached, she had felt too weak to leave her bed; Bellah went to see her.

Notwithstanding the distance which the difference of caste marked between these two girls, the habits of their early years, the trials of disastrous times, exile and danger suffered in communion had drawn between them the ties of a close affection. In Bellah's ardent soul, that sentiment was intensified by the naïve admiration she felt for Alix's poetic beauty: she fancied that she discovered in her some resemblance to the fabled queens of Armorican legends. Thereupon, she had striven with anxious

delicacy to relieve from the very appearance of servility the grave and somewhat distant nature of the young Bretonne. The latter,—on her part a heart more burning still, because it was more concentrated,—filled with gratitude, subjugated by the authority of a superior intelligence, had felt the hereditary devotion for the noble companion of her childhood increase to the point of fanaticism.

When she saw Mademoiselle de Kergant entering her room, Alix raised herself slightly on her bed; a painful smile passed over her pale face.

“Mon Dieu!” said Bellah, taking the unhappy girl’s hand, “are you suffering much?”

“Yes, mademoiselle, very much,” said Alix.

“Am I perhaps the cause of it? I have not yet spoken to my father in behalf of your intended. . . . Forgive me; I have had so many cares on my mind. . . . Besides, you had recommended me yourself to wait a few days. . . . But I am going to speak to him this very day, and I’ll try and obtain that Fleur-de-Genêt shall not leave, if it is the thought of that which makes you so ill.”

“No, no, thank you,” interrupted the game-keeper’s daughter sharply; “my father would never forgive him if he stayed. . . . Besides, that is not it . . . I am ill.—And so you are going to be married, mademoiselle?”

“Yes; to-night!”

“You love him?” asked Alix after a brief pause.

“Yes.”

Alix’s large eyes, still further dilated by fever, flashed for an instant with a dull light, but softened gradually again as they met Bellah’s tender glance. With a sudden grasp, she compelled Mademoiselle de Kergant to lean

over her, and she drew her with a sort of violence over her half-exposed bosom ; then throwing both arms around her, she broke into loud sobs.

Bellah made no effort to resist that impulsive manifestation of affection ; an unaccountable sympathy of youth and grief caused her own tears to overflow at once. Seated on the edge of the bed, she remained long without speaking, their tears mingling on their faces. Alix with a listless hand wiped off with the flowing locks of her long hair the moist cheeks of her beloved rival.

Kado came to interrupt that mute interchange of two sorrows that ignored while consoling each other. Bellah pressed once more the hand of Alix, and went out after addressing a few kind words to the game-keeper.

M. de Kergant, called away by his military duties, had spent the afternoon in the forest, in conference with the other chiefs. As the first shades of the night were spreading over the country he returned to the chateau. A keen satisfaction beamed upon his countenance. Everything favored Fleur-de-Lys' plans. The spies, who kept up a continual telegraphy between the forest and the republican lines, had seen the bivouac fires kindled in the enemy's camp ; they had just heard the retreat sounded. The army of the Blues preserved its defensive attitude ; it was going to sleep without suspicion, leaving a free field to the manœuvre projected for the night. The royalist forces, issuing from the forest through its western boundary, were going to turn the enemy on his right, reach Locminé, and then go down to the coast and there effect their junction with the regiments of emigrants that were to land there from the English flotilla. The success of this movement, which was combined with the

operations of the Vendean generals, seemed likely to be decisive for the King's cause throughout the whole west of France. Such at least was M. de Kergant's hope.

Leaning against the balustrade of an open window, the old gentleman spoke with enthusiasm of the more happy future which he foresaw; the whole family together with a few friends and neighbors were assembled in the parlor: they all listened in silence. Bellah, standing by her father's side, with her elbow resting on the window-railing, was gazing vaguely into the starry darkness. Suddenly she drew herself up, and laying her hand on the marquis' arm:

"Hark!" she said.

All approached eagerly and listened attentively. Amid the calm of the night, an imposing murmur was heard, like the distant sound of an angry sea breaking upon a beach.

It was the army of the *chouans* on the march. A few moments later, Fleur-de-Lys, followed by a small group of officers, rode into the court-yard at a gallop.

In the vicinity of Kergant the royalist bands divided into two columns, which continued to march on two parallel and not very distant lines: while one division followed a road that turned behind the park and the meadows, the other passed in front of the chateau. The authority of Fleur-de-Lys had succeeded in disciplining that dangerous march and in crushing for this supreme occasion the irregular habits of his men. The women, the children, and the old men, all non-combatants, had been left in the forest or scattered among the surrounding villages. A dark and compact mass marched for nearly two hours through the court-yard and the avenue of the chateau,

without disorder and without any noise save the tumult inseparable from the movements of a vast multitude. At intervals only, the window-panes rattled in their leaden frames, as the heavy war-chariots and the massive wheels of the caissons shook the pavement. From time to time, the men, recognizing Fleur-de-Lys in the luminous frame of one of the manor-windows, raised their arms and waved their hats in the air. These silent acclamations had a strange and striking character. The young general, with the small body of officers specially attached to his person, was to overtake the head of the columns immediately after the celebration of his marriage.

It was eleven o'clock at night. Mademoiselle de Kergant, who since the arrival of the young chieftain had disappeared from the parlor, now returned leaning on her father's arm. She was dressed in white, with simple and severe taste, though not without that care which every woman bestows, almost unconsciously, even on the very preparations for her own self-sacrifice. They proceeded at once into the great adjoining hall, where the family and the guests of the marquis were to meet for the last time at his table. The supper was sad. The toilets of the women, the brilliant illumination, the air of festivity which the aged canoness had striven to impart to this wedding repast, nothing could overcome the impression of a solemn danger and the prospect of an imminent separation. Andrée, pensive and silent, shook at times with convulsive shudders. Bellah retained the appearance of her usual dignity; but her extreme pallor, her uncertain glance, the permanent furrow that broke the regular arch of her eyebrows, betrayed the struggle which her soul was sustaining. Fleur-de-Lys alone appeared a stranger to

the apprehensions of each, and wholly wrapped up in the feast, in his love, and in his triumph. His radiant brow, his animated speech were gradually dissipating all restraint, arousing hope, promising fortune, and restoring confidence to the discouraged spirits. Suddenly, however, a cloud spread over the young chieftain's handsome features, and a sentence he had begun remained unfinished: the door had just opened, and Alix had come in; she was approaching the table slowly and noiselessly. M. de Kergant ran to meet her and gently reproached her with her imprudence. Alix replied in a scarce audible voice that she felt better, and that, since she was strong enough, she wished to be present at her young mistress's marriage. M. de Kergant, moved by this token of attachment, insisted no more, and the game-keeper's daughter sat down by the side of Andrée; but the contracted features of the young girl, her sombre attire, her tottering step, her unexpected appearance, had closed again, like a fatal omen, all lips and all hearts. Fleur-de-Lys himself seemed anxious; his language became strange and incoherent: seeing that they were looking at him with some surprise, he blushed slightly. All conversation ceased. The supper was drawing to an end in the midst of a death-like silence, when the chapel bell struck twelve, announcing that the priest was at the altar, awaiting the bride and groom.

The chapel of Kergant, a construction of the simplest Gothic style, stood on the left of the chateau on a narrow hillock raised on all sides a few feet above the level of the yard. This mound, which served as a base to the little edifice, was almost circular in shape; on the side towards the fields it presented a steep rocky face extending down to the bottom of a ravine. On the side of the court

it came down in grassy slopes, pierced here and there by an arris of masonry. Ten or twelve steps led up from the yard to the small lawn that stretched in front of the porch, like a section of a village graveyard. Between the hillock and the moats of the castle was an open space communicating with the country, and through which the royalist band had passed. A farm-house joined the mound on the left. Every other side of the parallelogram forming the court-yard of the chateau was closed by stables, barns, and other out-houses.

The movement and the tumult of the march had ceased ; some three hundred men had remained behind as a body-guard to the commanding general. Half of them were scattered in small detachments along the avenue ; the rest stood motionless in a half-circle around the steps that led to the chapel. By the mild, limpid light of a scintillating night the uniform of the King's chasseurs could be recognized ; they opened their ranks before the silent cortège which had just issued from the chateau and gave the military salute. A few moments later, as the ringing of the sacred bell announced the beginning of the ceremony, the soldiers, uncovering their heads, clasped their hands and knelt by the side of their guns laid on the ground.

A few candles cast an uncertain light upon the interior of the chapel, leaving a part of the assistants in the shade. Fleur-de-Lys and Bellah were kneeling in front of the railing that enclosed the sanctuary ; the priest, an old man with white hair, had his hand raised to bless the nuptial couple ; the Marquis de Kergant with his sister, the canoness, occupied a position a few steps behind his daughter, kneeling on a long slab covered with armorial bearings.

Andrée's features had lost the character of childish grace that was familiar to them, and now bore an extraordinary expression of impatience and anger. A little farther, Alix had remained standing, leaning on Kado's arm : her eyes were fixed, her features drawn ; she looked as if she were listening in expectation of some unknown sound. The royalist officers, together with the marquis' household, filled the dark nave of the little church.

The moment had come for the irrevocable union of the affianced couple: the priest had asked the sacramental questions. Bellah lifted her brow, paler than her maiden's veil, addressed to Heaven a last appeal for mercy, and held out her trembling hand to receive the ring that was about to bind her life forever ; but suddenly the young general dropped the symbolic ornament on the steps of the altar : his name had just been shouted outside in a lamentable tone of voice. He rose ; a similar feeling of terror and anxiety had become suddenly depicted upon every countenance. After a brief interval, the same distant and plaintive voice repeated the name of Fleur-de-Lys ; then the sound of a horse's gallop was distinctly heard. The young general rushed from the chapel, followed by all those present, and crossed rapidly the space between the porch and the steps. A horse white with foam stood at the foot of the stairs ; the soldiers were assisting in alighting a horseman who seemed scarcely able to stand. His face and his chest were blood-stained. He was told that Fleur-de-Lys was before him ; he stared at him for a moment with frightful fixedness, murmured the word " Betrayed ! " and fell dead at the chieftain's feet.

At the same moment, and as if to confirm the wounded

man's word, a dull, deep roar sounded in the distance. Fleur-de-Lys raised his hand to impose silence; a few soldiers fell on their knees and applied their ears to the ground. The same noise, like the echo of an underground storm, was again repeatedly heard.

"That is the sound of cannon!" said Fleur-de-Lys. "The army has been attacked! Let our horses be brought forth at once!"

While this order was being hastily executed, the priest, leaning over the horseman, was vainly trying to discover in him a lingering spark of life. The soldiers, sunk in gloomy stupor, surrounded this sorrowful group. The dwellers of the chateau were pressing in disorder on the chapel steps; some of the women wept. At every fresh report brought by the night-breeze, a thrill ran through the crowd.

"My boys!" exclaimed Fleur-de-Lys in a powerful voice, "that is the cannon of the Blues, but it is ours also. . . . Our brethren are fighting! they are calling us! In less than half an hour we may be with them. In the name of God and the King, forward! The roads are open. Follow! . . ."

Fleur-de-Lys was interrupted by a rumor that seemed to spread all along the avenue; the cries "To arms! The Blues!" were repeated by all the sentries, one after another; then the near sound of musketry suddenly broke forth. The young general already had one foot on the stirrup; he withdrew it quickly, and drawing his sword: "Follow me, boys!" he exclaimed, and he started running towards the avenue. Every one who was able to wield a weapon followed after him. The priest remained alone in the vast enclosure of the court-yard.

“My daughters,” he said, returning with tottering steps towards the chapel, “let us go in and pray.”

Mademoiselle de Kergant and Alix followed the old man to the foot of the altar and knelt by his side; the other women, unable to turn their minds to things divine in such a moment, remained on the lawn and under the vaulted porch, exchanging in a whisper a few frightened words. Some of the windows of the chateau were open and blazing with light. In the yard, the horses, left to themselves, wandered about here and there, neighing at the sound of battle and the smell of powder.

In the meantime, the noise of the fusilade, mingled with confused clamors and groans, became at every moment more intense and more distinct. At intervals the loud voice of the cannon roared in the distance. Suddenly, the fire seemed to slacken; rare and isolated explosions seemed to indicate that the fight had been interrupted; then the noise of hurried steps was heard, and the entrance to the avenue was seen crowded with a band of *chouans* in disorder. Shrill cries issued from the group of women scattered on the lawn. Bellah ran to join them. A discharge whose light flashed through the foliage shook the windows of the chapel: the enemy was coming.

Fleur-de-Lys' troop, having already lost half its number, had scattered through the court, and were now reloading their guns. Bellah, noticing among them her father's tall stature and white hair, pushed aside with a wild gesture the throng of her companions, and made her way to the top of the stairs; but there she stopped short, struck by a fresh impresssion: the regular and serried mass of the republicans was debouching from the avenue; a young

man on horseback, bareheaded and with uplifted sword, advanced on the flank of the column. By the light of the explosions Bellah recognized Hervé.

“Surrender!” shouted the young officer. “Surrender in the name of Heaven! we are masters of the chateau!”

As he spoke, a shower of grape-shot, pouring out of all the windows of the old manor, felled some twenty chouans to the earth. Those who remained standing seemed for a moment uncertain and hesitating.

“Surrender!” repeated the republican commander; “surrender, I tell you; the chateau is ours!”

“To the chapel!” replied Fleur-de-Lys’ vibrating voice, “to the chapel! God and the King! God and the King! Come on, boys!”

Hervé jumped down from his horse, and turning towards the front of his men, he gave them rapidly his orders, adding a few words to recommend to their humanity the innocent creatures who had taken refuge in the chapel.

“Don’t be alarmed, major,” said a voice in a grave and somewhat jeering tone. “We know that your little jewel of a sister is in there; that’s enough: we’ll put on our gloves.”

“Waste no more time firing,” said Hervé. “With the bayonet now, and forward!”

With these words, crossing the court-yard diagonally, he entered the open space extending between the avenue and the hillock on which the chapel stood; a platoon of grenadiers followed on the double-quick; the rest of the troop kept advancing, but more slowly and in close ranks.

The royalist chasseurs had already scaled the mound. Some were in the chapel, driving in the women, wild with

terror; they took position at every window, at every aperture, and even in the little steeple that surmounted the roof. Others occupied the lawn to the very edge of the bank. Fleur-de-Lys stood in the midst of them, between the porch and the stairs, his sword in one hand, a pistol in the other. The Marquis de Kergant and Kado, both their faces black with powder, stood by the chief with ready muskets. Fleur-de-Lys' brief and panting voice broke alone at times the gloomy silence that prevailed on the lawn and in the chapel. The detachment commanded by Hervé was rapidly approaching the mound; Fleur-de-Lys lifted his sword. Two successive discharges, directed with that formidable precision which was peculiar to the Breton soldiers, covered the ground with republican bodies; but Hervé already had a foot on the stairs.

"Forward with me, the Mayençais!" he exclaimed. At the same moment, the grenadiers, climbing up the slope on all sides, swarmed on the esplanade before the chapel.

To the impetuous fury of the assailants, the *chouans* opposed the energy of desperate resolution. A terrible mêlée began: it was a hand-to-hand fight; the firing was paralyzed on both sides. Nothing was now heard but the clangor of steel striking against steel, the dull thud of the musket-stocks falling like clubs, and a confusion of smothered groans and curses. Groups clasped in mortal embrace rolled pell-mell down the embankment.

At the height of this desperate struggle, a lurid light was suddenly reflected in the glass windows that overlooked the porch. In an instant the light increased enormously, and soon illuminated the whole court-yard with its sinister rays. Some burning wads, falling at the foot

of the buildings opposite the chapel, had ignited some heaps of dry straw: the fire had spread inside; large sparks were flying through the air amid dense clouds of smoke; flaming jets already darted through the windows of the barns and burst through the thatched roofs.

The fight, guided by the reverberation of the incipient conflagration, went on with increased violence; the blows were struck with a surer and prompter hand. The dead and the wounded, heaped up all around the foot of the mound, assisted fresh republican detachments in climbing up the precipitous slope; *chouans* issuing from the chapel came at the same time to restore the equality of the forces. Hervé, wounded in the face, twice thrown back down the steps, had succeeded at last in reaching the centre of the lawn by cutting his way through with his sword; he found himself face to face with Fleur-de-Lys, who stood invulnerable still, with one foot resting on a heap of bodies, brandishing his bloody sword. The two young men uttered a shout as they recognized each other, and their two blades met; at the first pass, Fleur-de-Lys' sword broke. At that critical moment the white figure of a woman appeared at one of the windows of the chapel, and leaned as if to jump out.

"Hervé!" shouted a shrill voice which was distinctly heard above the roar of battle, "Herve! they are killing my father! . . ."

Hervé's arm remained in suspense; his eyes turned suddenly away from his disarmed enemy. He saw, a few steps away, the Marquis de Kergant leaning against the wall and surrounded by a threatening circle of grenadiers.

“*Mes enfants !* Bruidoux !” exclaimed Hervé, rushing towards the group, “save the old man !”

As he spoke those words, the report of a pistol sounded behind him, and he fell, uttering a feeble groan. Fleur-de-Lys, after having performed this act of hatred rather than of courage, threw away his pistol and picked up a wounded man’s sword ; but Sergeant Bruidoux had seen the murder, and he had promptly levelled his gun at the young general : “Coward !” he exclaimed.

The shot went off at the same time and pierced Fleur-de-Lys’ breast. None of the particulars of this scene, the rapidity of which cannot be retraced in words, had escaped the republican soldiers who had remained in the court. The officer upon whom the command then devolved raised his voice :

“Down from the esplanade !” he exclaimed, “down, all of you !”

The grenadiers obeyed and jumped in disorder upon the pavement below. A volley from the republicans swept off every one who was left standing on the lawn.

“To the assault, now, and let us avenge the major !” shouted the officer.

The entire troop now scaled the hillock again after him ; but after heroic efforts, they were compelled to fall back by the grape-shot that was poured upon them through the barricaded apertures of the porch and the plunging fire of the windows and the steeple. The soldiers, in obedience to a fresh command, scattered through the yard, where the heat of the fire had become almost insufferable ; a few knelt at the foot of the mound, sheltered by the height of the embankment ; others took up positions here and there behind pieces of furniture,

troughs, and wagons which had been taken out of the burning sheds. Thus entrenched, they were able to keep up the fusilade with less danger, and with a degree of success which was evident from the gradually slackening fire from the chapel.

Suddenly a *chouan* of gigantic stature came out of the porch and advanced alone over the lawn. Bruidoux, who was kneeling by the mound, rose at once:

“Comrades!” he shouted with all his might, “don’t shoot! that’s the old game-keeper who saved my life! Surrender, my brave fellow, surrender!”

It was indeed Kado; he seemed not to have heard the sergeant’s voice; but availing himself hastily of the brief respite which the astonishment of the republicans afforded him, he extricated two bodies from the bloody heap,—those of Hervé and Fleur-de-Lys,—shouldered them both, and returned to the chapel with his double burden.

“Surrender!” repeated Bruidoux, “surrender, all of you! the steeple is on fire! the chapel is burning!”

No voice replied. The chairs and the benches that barricaded the entrance of the porch were thrust outwards; and the massive door of the little church was slammed with a loud noise.

The frightful advice which Bruidoux had just offered to the game-keeper was true. Fragments escaped from the furnace that was consuming the barns had been carried by the breeze over to the parched roof of the farm-house contiguous to the chapel, and already tongues of fire were darting up towards the steeple. In the dense smoke two or three *chouans* looked as if suspended to the wood-work, and were loading their muskets. From

the lower windows of the chapel, a few shots were still fired at intervals.

Bruidoux went up to the officer who had succeeded Hervé :

“Captain,” he said, “can nothing be done for those poor people?”

The officer, his features violently contracted, his hands crossed over the hilt of his sword, the point of which was scraping the soil, contemplated with a mournful eye the progress of the conflagration.

“What can I do?” he said. “You see that they are firing still; my duty forbids me to sacrifice a single life unnecessarily; look at those fellows’ faces up there: they will never surrender!”

“I’ll go and speak to them myself,” said Bruidoux. “Allow me only to promise them their life.”

“Promise anything you like,” said the officer, turning his face aside, “for it is awful!”

Bruidoux returned to the mound and jumped upon the esplanade. Two bullets pierced his clothes; he kept on, however, and reached, safe and sound, the shelter of the porch; then battering the door with the butt of his musket:

“We guarantee you your life, all of you!” he exclaimed. “Kado! citizens! ladies! we promise you life, liberty, anything, if you’ll come out of there!”

But whether the roar of the flames covered his voice, or whether the crimes which had stained that war caused his promises to be doubted, the honest sergeant spoke in vain. He persisted, however, in his mission of mercy until his comrades’ shouts warned him that the roof of

the chapel was about falling in and cutting off his retreat.

In the meantime, here is what was going on inside the chapel: The marble pavement fairly disappeared under the heaps of corpses; at every moment fresh victims fell from the heights of the windows, or tumbled down the steps of the little winding staircase that led to the steeple. Wide fissures showed the arch of the roof, through which coozed a dense and black smoke; clusters of sparks scintillated at times through the sombre canopy that waved around the cornices. The old priest lay lifeless at the foot of the altar; the canoness and one of the waiting-maids of the chateau had fallen dead at his side; other women, living, but more unhappy still, groaned and wrung their hands in despair. Andrée had fainted from fright, and Bellah and Alix, kneeling over her, were striving in vain to restore her to her senses; the two young girls turned at times their wild glances upon Fleur-de-Lys and Hervé, both stretched side by side against the marble of the altar.

At the foot of the sanctuary steps, the game-keeper, with the assistance of a young *chouan*, the only one besides himself who remained unscathed, had cleared of dead bodies the emblazoned slab that seemed to mark the entrance to a family burial-vault; by means of iron bars detached from the railing, they loosened a few marble tiles around the slab; then raising the heavy block of granite on the side looking towards the altar, and propping it up gradually with fragments of arms or furniture, they succeeded in raising one of its extremities some two feet above the floor; the aperture revealed the first steps of a stairway disappearing in the depths of a

vault. The two iron bars, firmly secured on the first step of this stairway, held up the slanting slab at its two angles. The young fellow who had assisted Kado in performing this task then grasped his gun again and returned to his post at the window. Almost immediately he fell back, shot through the heart.

As soon as the outlet of the crypt had seemed available, a group of women had besieged it with fury. Kado represented to them earnestly that he would be unable to raise the slab again if they upset it in the disorder of their action, and that all means of safety would be thus cut off from them; he compelled them to stoop one after the other, and they disappeared in the darkness of the underground vault. Turning then towards the altar, the game-keeper lifted with one hand Andrée's frail and inanimate body, seized Bellah with the other, and dragged her towards the open trap-door.

"No, no! not me! Hervé!" murmured the girl, trying to resist the powerful grasp that was forcing her along.

"Don't be alarmed mademoiselle," replied Kado. "I promise you to save him too; but come in, come in, or I shan't be responsible for anything."

Mademoiselle de Kergant obeyed. Kado went down after her, carrying Hervé's sister. He came up again a few minutes later. A denser smoke now filled the chapel.

"Alix, my child!" exclaimed the game-keeper. "Mon Dieu! the light dazzles me, the smoke blinds me. Where are you?"

"Here, father!" said Alix, "near you."

"Yes, daughter, yes. What a night, great God! Can you see? . . . Where is the general? I must save him

first. I'll save our young master next, if God will let me . . . Where is he? Which one is Fleur-de-Lys?"

"This one, father," replied the girl.

The game-keeper lifted up the motionless body Alix had pointed out to him, and walked carefully down the yawning crypt.

"Come, Alix," he said, "come! Don't wait another minute; follow me. . . . You are coming, are you not?"

"Yes, father, yes," replied Alix; but she was not following him. She had gone up to the wounded man who still remained at the foot of the altar, and stooping towards him:

"Fleur-de-Lys," she said, "I told you that if ever you betrayed me, you'd recognize me. "Do you recognize me now?"

A groan escaped from the wounded man's lips.

"How base!" resumed the young girl, whose words were hissed between her teeth; "how base and how barbarous! By what cruel ties you held me! Ah! you knew that I must suffer everything, anything, rather than reveal to my father his own child's shame, rather than break the heart of my unconscious rival! And I did! Poor Bellah! I was the cause of many sorrows to her; but the bitterest of all I kept to myself! I did not make her blush for your infamy. She may weep over you, for she does not know you!"

During this speech, Fleur-de-Lys' face had assumed an expression of undefinable pain; he seemed to collect painfully his fast failing strength. His lips opened slightly:

"Listen!" he murmured, "listen: I have never loved any one but you. . . . Pride, ambition blinded me

. . . but before God, I never loved any one but you. . . . Take my hand, Alix: you are my wife! . . .”

“Wretch that I am!” exclaimed the girl, “he is deceiving me still; but I love him and I shall save him!”

At the same time throwing her arms around him, she dragged him towards the uplifted slab. Standing by the vault, her father was gazing at her with a terrible expression. Alix stepped back, her knees gave way, and her burden fell at her feet.

“Father!” she exclaimed, clasping her hands in anguish, “let me die, but save him!”

“Neither you nor him,” said the game-keeper in a hoarse voice; “treason never entered there!”

He turned around as he uttered these words, and with one kick upset the two iron bars that held up the slab: the sepulchral stone fell back heavily.

“Let us pray now,” resumed the old man in a solemn accent. “Pray, Monsieur le Duc, if you hear me. Pray for him, you, if you love him.”

Alix replied with a heart-rending cry. It was the last. Torrents of flame now burst into the chapel; a horrible creaking sound was heard; long gerbs of sparks shot from the wood-work, which was giving way in all directions, and the roof finally fell in with a crash, burying the living and the dead beneath its blazing wreck.

An hour had sufficed to encompass so many disasters. When the pale light of dawn came to mingle with the expiring gleam of the fire, it found, within the entire enclosure of the smoking ruins, nothing but a solitude scattered with human remains.

XI.

“ And I heard locking up the under door
Of the horrible tower; whereat, without a word,
I gazed into the faces of my sons.”—DANTE.

THE crypt that now sheltered all that was left of the family and household of Kergant extended in a circular form in the body of the little hillock under a vaulted ceiling, sustained by a course of masonry on one side, and on the other by the rock itself. Here and there, on the damp soil, a tombstone stood out in relief. A few narrow fissures in the rock were barely sufficient to renew the dense atmosphere of the crypt. When the granite slab that closed the solitary outlet from this underground shelter had fallen back under Kado's foot, not even the feeblest ray of light came to disturb the habitual darkness of that inauspicious spot. At the same time, the dull crash that shook the vault warned the unfortunate captives that the secret of their retreat no longer belonged to any living being: that their tomb had closed over their heads.

Mademoiselle de Kergant alone had retained sufficient freedom of mind to feel the horror of this last blow. The other women, dumb and as if struck with idiocy, were sobbing in a corner. At the sound of the fall of the chapel's roof, Bellah had run up the steps and with a desperate effort had attempted to lift up the slab; but the united strength of several powerful men would have been inadequate to perform this task. Bellah returned slowly, press-

ing her burning forehead in her two hands. She groped her way back to the place where she had left Andrée stretched on the ground with her head slightly raised against the wall.

"May God," she said, kneeling by the side of the young girl, "may God spare you the waking, poor, innocent child!"

As she spoke, a groan escaped from the lips of the wounded man who lay by the side of Andrée and whom Bellah had heard Kado designate under the name of Fleur-de-Lys.

"Are you suffering much, sir?" she said, stooping towards him she supposed to be the young general.

"Bellah! is that you?" murmured the wounded man.

Mademoiselle de Kergant uttered a deep and heart-rending cry: "Hervé!" she said, "my own Hervé!" And she passed her hand rapidly over the breast and blood-stained face of the young officer, but with such tender precaution that it felt to Hervé like the fluttering of a bird's wings.

After a few minutes devoted to a silent and fervent prayer, and also to a secret feeling of shame at having forgotten for a moment her father's death, Bellah resumed in a less excited tone:

"So that is you, Hervé! you! Here we are, united at last, but at what a moment and in what a spot! God of mercy! you don't know . . . !"

"I do know," interrupted Hervé. "I was suffering, but I did not lose consciousness. I know where we are. . . . Only I dare not ask you . . . my sister, my little Andrée?"

"She is here, safe and sound; but she fainted and has not yet recovered: there she is, lying beside you."

"Alas! must we thank God? Would it not be better for her. . . . Tell me, Bellah . . . you are brave yourself . . . the slab has been closed again? Every one must be dead up yonder?"

"Unless through a miracle, every one is dead," said Bellah.

"And so no one knows that we are here?"

"No one, I believe."

"In the name of Heaven, dear Bellah! let Andrée remain in ignorance of this until . . . until the end."

"Silence, Hervé, silence! She is coming-to; she may hear you."

Andrée was indeed gradually recovering her senses; she stretched her arms and turned over on her chilly couch like a child awakening in its cradle. Mademoiselle de Kergant, leaning over her, called her in a caressing voice. The poor child murmured at first a few incoherent words, and asked if it would not soon be daylight; then, the sentiment of the terrible reality removing by degrees the clouds from her mind:

"Where am I? *mon Dieu!*" she exclaimed.

Bellah, covering her with kisses, replied that they were in a place of safety, and made her take Hervé's hand. She informed her then of what it was impossible to conceal from her, their irreparable losses and all the circumstances which had compelled them to seek a refuge in the underground vault; but she added that Kado had succeeded in escaping with two or three of the male servants of the chateau, and that he would return to extricate them from their prison as soon as there would be no fur-

ther danger of falling into the hands of the republicans.

These assurances joined to the presence of a brother she had despaired of ever seeing again quieted Andrée's apprehensions; and a few rays of daylight that were now penetrating through the cracks in the wall and the interstices of the rock helped to restore entire calm to her mind. The two girls, uniting their efforts, assisted Hervé in assuming the position which on account of his wound was least painful to him. Fleur-de-Lys' bullet had shattered his shoulder, and every motion drew from him feeble and unconscious moans. But he strove at once to belie by his calm and almost cheerful language the involuntary surprises of physical pain, Andrée, reciprocating these well-meant falsehoods, tried to amuse him with her smiling and ingenuous chatter which she intermingled with furtive tears.

Bellah left them from time to time, and went up to the peasant-women, who were crouching against the wall, lamenting at intervals, then again relapsing into silent apathy. Resistance to the great trials of misfortune is not measured by the strength of the body, but by the power of the soul. Bellah, whose delicate frame had been further weakened by the protracted sufferings of the past few weeks, had suddenly found fresh life in the extreme misery under which her companions with more robust limbs but less stout hearts utterly gave way. Mademoiselle de Kergant, addressing in turn each of these unhappy creatures, calling them by name, pressing their hands, speaking to them of their faith they were forgetting, of God, who did not forget them, succeeded in inspiring them with a certain amount of resignation.

Several times in the course of every hour, the noble girl returned to this afflicted group; they kissed her hands and bathed them with tears; they clung to the skirts of her dress, beseeching her not to forsake them. They seemed to look upon her as the Angel of Charity.

Hervé seemed more calm. He had lost much blood, and the throbs of fever had thus been somewhat allayed. Andrée, happy to see him suffer less, and full of confidence in the prospects that had been held out to her, was gradually recovering the gracious vivacity of her disposition. She formed projects; she spoke of the future, never suspecting that the whole future of her youth was confined within the narrow limits of this funereal vault. She irritated by her innocent reveries the secret anguish which she sought to appease. Mademoiselle de Kergant, trying to moderate hopes which were destined to be so cruelly disappointed, reminded her gently of all the blood and all the mourning that was upon them.

“Bellah,” interrupted Hervé, “you must forgive me the share I have had in all the blows that have stricken you. I expect forgiveness of your kindness—of your sense of justice.”

“How could I find fault with you, Hervé,” replied the girl, “in presence of that wound you received while trying to save my father?”

“Tell him you love him still; that’ll be much better,” said Mademoiselle de Pelven.

“For mercy’s sake, dear Andrée!” rejoined Bellah.

“What harm would that be?” Andrée went on, with an emotion not unmixed with her usual childish thoughtlessness. “Our misfortunes are terrible, I know, and I feel as you do; but why refuse to acknowledge the con-

solation which God has left to us orphans? His hand has directed everything, and I bless it while weeping over those it has stricken down. God has not permitted that you should become the prey of that bad man—that wretched Fleur-de-Lys . . . for you were sacrificing yourself; Hervé must know it full well. Besides, you have no speeches to make now, and this is the reason why: you know your letter—your famous letter? Well, it was I took it, and I sent it to him—to Hervé! and I dare say he knows it by heart now.”

Mademoiselle de Kergant was at first quite astounded at this revelation; then she stammered a few words of reproach. But the hesitating hand of the wounded man having suddenly met hers, Bellah hushed; she bowed her head as if in shame; the exhausted spring of her tears opened again and bathed Pelven's face. Andrée moved a few steps away, leaving them to that effusion the happiness of which was disturbed by more bitterness than she could suppose.

As Andrée was mechanically trying to widen one of the cracks in the wall, she felt a stone trembling under her fingers, and she succeeded in loosening it almost without an effort. A brighter light pervaded the crypt. Andrée called to her sister with an exclamation of joy. The fallen stone had left in the wall, at its junction with the arch of the roof, an aperture large enough to admit the fist. The space went on growing narrower, through the thickness of the masonry, in a vertical and irregular fissure, which extended to the outside; according to all appearances, this rent must have opened outwardly in one of the fragments of wall that showed in some spots through the grassy slopes of the hillock. Bellah tried to

widen the opening, but in vain. The only advantage the captives could derive from this discovery was to breathe a less stifling atmosphere, and to distinguish, through a loophole about two fingers wide and three feet deep, a small strip of the pavement of the yard and a green belt cut out on the grass under the shade of the first trees of the avenue. This faint vision of the outer world, of liberty, and of sunshine, caused a poignant impression to Mademoiselle de Kergant. Andrée, on the contrary, was confirmed by this perspective, limited though it was, in her hopes of early deliverance, and believed it already half realized. She returned from time to time to feast her eye upon the narrow view revealed through the fissure, watching with excited impatience the advent of a liberator.

Bellah, availing herself of a moment when Andrée was absorbed in this idle contemplation, asked Hervé, in a whisper, whether he thought their cries could be heard through that aperture, the form and dimensions of which she had described to him. Hervé replied that he did not think it were possible, owing to the thickness of the masonry and the irregularities of the fissure, that would break up the voice and smother it.

“At any rate,” he added, “the sounds that would reach the outside would be too uncertain to attract the attention of an indifferent person, and if any one came to look for a relative or a friend, he would surely search among the wreck of the chapel; in that event we would hear the sound of his steps over the vault, and it would be time enough to try this last resource. Until then, these screams could only intensify the horror of this sojourn, and Andrée and the others could no longer be deceived.

"O Bellah! with what joy I would give all the blood I have left to spare you and all the rest of those here the terrible moments I foresee!"

"But, I have been thinking, Hervé . . . nothing is lost yet. . . . They may come,—they certainly will come to bury the dead. . . ."

Here Bellah's voice expired on her trembling lips.

Hervé replied after a pause:

"Bellah, it is impossible to deceive you; you do not, you cannot expect it. They will doubtless come, but in two days or later, perhaps. Terror prevails throughout the country. I have often seen the theatres of massacres like this abandoned for some time . . . and then, when they do come, will they know the secret of this crypt? Will you then have strength enough to utter a cry? . . . and will that cry be heard? That is doubtful, improbable."

"So," said Bellah, "must we then wholly despair, tell me, Hervé! Speak without fear: you know me well."

"We have," replied Hervé, "one hope, and one hope only: that's Francis. His duty attached him to the general's person. If he has survived the battle that was fought last night, I have no doubt that he . . . I don't know what he may do; but it seems to me that I would save him if he were here and I were in his place. . . . Poor Francis!"

Long hours elapsed thus. Already the day was ending, and the crypt was gradually again being wrapped in its lugubrious obscurity. Andrée had returned to sit at her brother's side. She began to suspect that she had been deceived, and she spoke no more; drops of perspiration trickled down her forehead. When the last gleams of light had disappeared, she was no longer able to with-

hold the expression of her anguish ; she uttered words of despair mingled with heart-rending sobs. Bellah held her long clasped against her heart without succeeding in quieting her. Hervé, who had again been seized with violent fever at the beginning of the night, could scarcely manage to remain in possession of his own reason.

In another part of the vault, the four servants offered a more pitiable sight still. Night had destroyed the faint ray of hope that sustained them, and the first pangs of hunger giving them at the same time a fearful foretaste of the morrow that awaited them, they started suddenly from their torpor with the furious energy of revolted instincts : they went about the crypt as if insane, striking their heads against the walls and uttering wild clamors. There was something brutal and odious in these transports that terrified Andrée's mind ; she ceased to groan, and soon fell into a state of prostration as deep as the sleep of childhood or of death. The women, yielding to the pious consolation which their young mistress did not cease to lavish upon them, and giving way also to exhausted nature, sank back gradually into silence and apparent insensibility.

We will pass rapidly over the hours that followed. Mademoiselle de Kergant had dropped upon her knees and was praying. Hervé had been unable to resist any longer the burning fear that consumed him ; strange and incoherent words crowded at times upon his lips ; his parched hands sought the damp coolness of the rock. Bellah made no effort to rouse him from this delirium, which, at least, was forgetfulness. Towards morning she gave way in spite of herself to the heavy sleep that

weighed upon her eyelids, and to the feeling of weakness that began to confuse her brain.

She was awakened by Hervé's voice, which was calling her persistently :

"Bellah ! Bellah !" he was saying, "listen ! I hear steps ! there are people in the chapel !"

Bellah thought at first that the wounded man was the dupe of some feverish fancy ; but on listening attentively, she heard distinctly the sound of footsteps over her head. She rose at once. Rays of daylight again penetrated into the crypt. She looked for the stairway, walked rapidly up the steps, and struck several blows in quick succession with the flat of her hand against the slab that closed the entrance.

"No, no ! not there !" said Hervé ! "It is impossible for them to hear that. Go to the opening in the wall, dear Bellah . . . and call, call with all your might !"

Bellah hurried down the steps again, and applying her lips to the sort of loophole which chance had made them discover the day before, she uttered several sharp screams ; then she stopped, holding her breath to listen.

"Mon Dieu !" she murmured after a few minutes, "I hear nothing more, Hervé ! They have left the chapel !"

Hervé made no reply.

"If we could all shout at once," Bellah went on, "perhaps . . ."

And while speaking, she ran to her companions in misery and tried to rouse them from their stupor, begging them to join their voices to her own. Andrée alone seemed to understand what was going on ; she rose to her knees, but fell back at once senseless. Bellah, shaking her head

despairingly, returned to the aperture and looked through again.

"I see them!" she exclaimed, "I see them!"

"See whom? Do you know them?" said Hervé.

"Yes . . . there is the young officer!"

"Francis?"

"And the old sergeant . . . and two others . . . they are going away, but slowly and regretfully, as it were."

"One more effort, Bellah, if you can, in the name of Heaven."

Bellah began screaming again at brief intervals.

"Well! well! are they coming back?" asked Hervé in a choking tone.

"No, no! Mon Dieu! Thou art cruel! . . . They are already beyond that part of the yard which I can see . . . but here they are again . . . they are in sight . . . at the entrance of the avenue! . . . They are going, they are going! O Lord! O Lord! make them hear me! Francis, help! O Francis, Francis!"

Bellah had exhausted in this last appeal all the strength she had left. Hervé questioned her again; she replied in a voice as faint as a breath:

"They have stopped; they are looking around . . . I believe, yes, . . . I believe that they have heard. . . . They seem to be holding a consultation. . . . Ah! woe to us! they are going! they are gone! . . ."

These last words seemed to tear Bellah's heart; she staggered, then sank to the earth in the folds of her white dress.

Hervé was taken with a fresh attack of delirium, which lucid flashes only made more painful: a strange phantasmagoria evoked before his eyes smiling images which the

frightful sentiment of the reality drove off at once. He imagined that he again heard footsteps over the vault, and something like the dull sound of a protracted labor; then these noises became lost among the nameless murmurs that filled his ears. Suddenly,—he fancied he must be dreaming still,—a flood of bright sunshine penetrated into the crypt: the outlines of human figures stood forth in the luminous frame of the absent slab.

“Pelven!” shouted from above a young and excited voice.

“Francis! Here, Francis! Help! help!” replied Hervé.

.

The old manor had been preserved by the strength of its walls from the effects of the fire. One hour after the scene we have just related, Major Hervé was lying on the wide antique bed where he had slept the sweet sleep of his early youth. In the embrasure of a window, an old surgeon in uniform was putting in order the alarming arsenal of his profession. A personage of an aspect at once grave and burlesque, whose striped breeches were shielded by a white linen apron, was raising with one hand the wounded man's head, and with the other holding up a cup of broth to his lips.

“On that subject, major,” this singular nurse was observing, “I dare say that you must have experienced the devil of a moral effect in that catacomb.”

“Yes, my old Bruidoux, the night was a pretty rough one. How is my sister?”

“You can see her picking up with the naked eye, major. Every one generally in the old shanty seems to

be recovering a taste for bread. There is only that poor little fellow, Kado's son, who continues to break my heart. Thereupon, major, an idea has occurred to me. I have a notion to adopt the child: he deserves it; for, firstly, he is an orphan; secondly, he saved my life in the forest; thirdly, he has just saved yours. For, if we had not met him in the avenue, and if he had not brought us plump onto the cellar-hatch, we were off for good and true, there is no mistake about it. I intend, therefore, to be a father to him; Colibri, on the other hand, offers to be his mother, and he is well fitted for the duty, owing to the extreme meekness of his disposition. . . ."

Francis came in at this moment.

"Major," he said, "Mademoiselle Bellah has quite recovered since I told her that the doctor warranted your own recovery."

"I warrant nothing," interrupted the old surgeon bluffly, "if you don't leave me in peace for a while! By the right about face! . . . enough talking!"

The sergeant and Francis left the room on tiptoe, and Hervé was soon sound asleep.

THE END.

1874.

1874.


G. W. CARLETON & Co

NEW BOOKS

AND NEW EDITIONS,

RECENTLY ISSUED BY

G. W. CARLETON & Co., Publishers,

Madison Square, New York.

The Publishers, upon receipt of the price in advance, will send any book on this Catalogue by mail, *postage free*, to any part of the United States.

All books in this list [unless otherwise specified] are handsomely bound in cloth board binding, with gilt backs, suitable for libraries.

Mary J. Holmes' Works.

TEMPEST AND SUNSHINE.....	\$1 50	DARKNESS AND DAYLIGHT.....	\$1 50
ENGLISH ORPHANS.....	1 50	HUGH WORTHINGTON.....	1 50
HOMESTEAD ON THE HILLSIDE.....	1 50	CAMERON PRIDE.....	1 50
LENA RIVERS.....	1 50	ROSE MATHER.....	1 50
MEADOW BROOK.....	1 50	ETHELYN'S MISTAKE.....	1 50
DORA DEANE.....	1 50	MILLBANK.....	1 50
COUSIN MAUDE.....	1 50	EDNA BROWNING.....	1 50
MARIAN GRAY.....	1 50	WEST LAWN.....(new).....	1 50

Marion Harland's Works.

ALONE.....	\$1 50	SUNNYBANK.....	\$1 50
HIDDEN PATH.....	1 50	HUSBANDS AND HOMES.....	1 50
MOSS SIDE.....	1 50	RUBY'S HUSBAND.....	1 50
NEMESIS.....	1 50	PHEMIE'S TEMPTATION.....	1 50
MIRIAM.....	1 50	THE EMPTY HEART.....	1 50
AT LAST.....	1 50	TRUE AS STEEL.....(new).....	1 50
HELEN GARDNER.....	1 50	JESSAMAINE....(just published)....	1 50

Charles Dickens' Works.

"Carleton's New Illustrated Edition."

THE PICKWICK PAPERS.....	\$1 50	MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT.....	\$1 50
OLIVER TWIST.....	1 50	OUR MUTUAL FRIEND.....	1 50
DAVID COPPERFIELD.....	1 50	TALE OF TWO CITIES.....	1 50
GREAT EXPECTATIONS.....	1 50	CHRISTMAS BOOKS.....	1 50
DOMBEY AND SON.....	1 50	SKETCHES BY "BOZ".....	1 50
BARNABY RUDGE.....	1 50	HARD TIMES, etc.....	1 50
NICHOLAS NICKLEBY.....	1 50	PICTURES OF ITALY, etc.....	1 50
OLD CURIOSITY SHOP.....	1 50	UNCOMMERCIAL TRAVELLER.....	1 50
BLEAK HOUSE.....	1 50	EDWIN DROOD, etc.....	1 50
LITTLE DORRIT.....	1 50	CHILD'S ENGLAND, and CATALOGUE	1 50

Augusta J. Evans' Novels.

BEULAH.....	\$1 75	ST. ELMO.....	\$2 00
MACARIA.....	1 75	VASHTI.....(new).....	2 00
INEZ.....	1 75		

Captain Mayne Reid—Illustrated.

SCALP HUNTERS.....	\$1 50	WHITE CHIEF.....	\$1 50
WAR TRAIL.....	1 50	HEADLESS HORSEMAN.....	1 50
HUNTER'S FEAST.....	1 50	LOST LENORE.....	1 50
TIGER HUNTER.....	1 50	WOOD RANGERS.....	1 50
OSCEOLA THE SEMINOLE.....	1 50	WILD HUNTRESS.....	1 50
THE QUADROON.....	1 50	THE MAROON.....	1 50
RANGERS AND REGULATORS.....	1 50	RIFLE RANGERS.....	1 50
WHITE GAUNTLET.....	1 50	WILD LIFE.....	1 50

A. S. Roe's Works.

A LONG LOOK AHEAD.....	\$1 50	TRUE TO THE LAST.....	\$1 50
TO LOVE AND TO BE LOVED.....	1 50	LIKE AND UNLIKE.....	1 50
TIME AND TIDE.....	1 50	LOOKING AROUND.....	1 50
I'VE BEEN THINKING.....	1 50	WOMAN OUR ANGEL.....	1 50
THE STAR AND THE CLOUD.....	1 50	THE CLOUD ON THE HEART.....	1 50
HOW COULD HE HELP IT.....	1 50	RESOLUTION..... (new)	1 50

Hand-Books of Society.

THE HABITS OF GOOD SOCIETY. The nice points of taste and good manners, and the art of making oneself agreeable.....	\$1 75
THE ART OF CONVERSATION.—A sensible work, for every one who wishes to be either an agreeable talker or listener.....	1 50
THE ARTS OF WRITING, READING, AND SPEAKING.—An excellent book for self-instruction and improvement.....	1 50
A NEW DIAMOND EDITION of the above three popular books.—Small size, elegantly bound, and put in a box.....	3 00

Mrs. Hill's Cook Book.

MRS. A. P. HILL'S NEW COOKERY BOOK, and family domestic receipts.....	\$2 00
---	--------

Charlotte Bronte and Miss Muloch.

SHIRLEY.—Author of Jane Eyre....	\$1 75	JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN.....	\$1 75
----------------------------------	--------	------------------------------	--------

Mrs. N. S. Emerson.

BETSEY AND I ARE OUT—And other Poems. A Thanksgiving Story.....	\$1 50
---	--------

Louisa M. Alcott.

MORNING GLORIES—A beautiful juvenile, by the author of "Little Women".....	1 50
--	------

The Crusoe Books—Famous "Star Edition."

ROBINSON CRUSOE.—New illustrated edition.....	\$1 50
SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON. Do. Do.....	1 50
THE ARABIAN NIGHTS. Do. Do.....	1 50

Julie P. Smith's Novels.

WIDOW GOLDSMITH'S DAUGHTER....	\$1 75	THE WIDOWER.....	\$1 75
CHRIS AND OTHO.....	1 75	THE MARRIED BELLE.....	1 75
TEN OLD MAIDS..... [in press]....	1 75		

Artemus Ward's Comic Works.

ARTEMUS WARD—HIS BOOK.....	\$1 50	ARTEMUS WARD—IN LONDON.....	\$1 50
ARTEMUS WARD—HIS TRAVELS.....	1 50	ARTEMUS WARD—HIS PANORAMA....	1 50

Fanny Fern's Works.

FOLLY AS IT FLIES.....	\$1 50	CAPER-SAUCE..... (new).....	\$1 50
GINGERSNAPS.....	1 50	A MEMORIAL.—By JAMES Parton..	2 00

Josh Billings' Comic Works.

JOSH BILLINGS' PROVERBS.....	\$1 50	JOSH BILLINGS FARMER'S ALMINAX, 25 cts.	
JOSH BILLINGS ON ICE.....	1 50	(In paper covers.)	

Verdant Green.

A racy English college story—with numerous comic illustrations.....	\$1 50
---	--------

Popular Italian Novels.

DOCTOR ANTONIO.—A love story of Italy. By Ruffini.....	\$1 75
BEATRICE CENCI.—By Guerrazzi. With a steel Portrait.....	1 75

M. Michelet's Remarkable Works.

LOVE (L'AMOUR).—English translation from the original French.....	\$1 50
WOMAN (LA FEMME). Do. Do. Do.....	1 50

May Agnes Fleming's Novels.

GUY EARLSCOURT'S WIFE.....\$1 75 | A WONDERFUL WOMAN \$1 75
 A TERRIBLE SECRET..... I 75

Ernest Renan's French Works.

THE LIFE OF JESUS.....\$1 75 | LIFE OF SAINT PAUL.....\$1 75
 LIVES OF THE APOSTLES..... I 75 | BIBLE IN INDIA. By Jacolliot ... 2 00

Geo. W. Carleton.

OUR ARTIST IN CUBA.....\$1 50 | OUR ARTIST IN AFRICA. (In press.) \$1 50
 OUR ARTIST IN PERU..... I 50 | OUR ARTIST IN MEXICO. Do. I 50

Popular Novels, from the French.

SHE LOVED HIM MADLY. Borys...\$1 75 | SO FAIR YET FALSE. By Chavette.\$1 75
 A FATAL PASSION. By Bernard. I 75

Maria J. Westmoreland's Novels.

HEART HUNGRY.....\$1 75 | CLIFFORD TROUPE. (New).....\$1 75

Sallie A. Brock's Novels.

KENNETH, MY KING.....\$1 75 | A NEW BOOK. (In press.).....

Don Quixote.

A BEAUTIFUL NEW 12MO EDITION. With illustrations by Gustave Dore.....\$1 50

Victor Hugo.

LES MISERABLES.—English translation from the French. Octavo.....\$2 50
 LES MISERABLES.—In the Spanish language..... 5 00

Algernon Charles Swinburne.

LAUS VENERIS, AND OTHER POEMS.—An elegant new edition.. ..\$1 50
 FRENCH LOVE-SONGS.—Selected from the best French authors..... I 50

Robert Dale Owen.

THE DEBATEABLE LAND BETWEEN THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT.....\$2 00
 THREADING MY WAY.—Twenty-five years of Autobiography... .. I 50

The Game of Whist.

POLE ON WHIST.—The late English standard work.....\$1 00

Mansfield T. Walworth's Novels.

WARWICK.....\$1 75 | STORMCLIFF.....\$1 75
 LULU..... I 75 | DELAPLAINE..... I 75
 HOTSPUR..... I 75 | BEVERLY. (New)..... I 75

Mother Goose Set to Music.

MOTHER GOOSE MELODIES.—With music for singing, and illustrations.....\$1 50

M. M. Pomeroy "Brick."

SENSE—(a serious book).....\$1 50 | NONSENSE—(a comic book).....\$1 50
 GOLD-DUST do. I 50 | BRICK-DUST do. I 50
 OUR SATURDAY NIGHTS..... I 50 | LIFE OF M. M. POMEROY..... I 50

John Esten Cooke.

FAIRFAX.....\$1 50 | HAMMER AND RAPIER.....\$1 50
 HILT TO HILT..... I 50 | OUT OF THE FOAM..... I 50

Feydeau and Cazenave.

FEMALE BEAUTY AND THE ARTS OF PLEASING.—From the French.....\$1 50

Joseph Rodman Drake.

THE CULPRIT FAY.—The well-known fairy poem, with 100 illustrations.....\$2 00
 THE CULPRIT FAY. Do. superbly bound in turkey morecco.. 5 00

Richard B. Kimball.

WAS HE SUCCESSFUL?.....\$1 75 | LIFE IN SAN DOMINGO.....\$1 50
 UNDERCURRENTS OF WALL STREET. I 75 | HENRY POWERS; BANKER..... I 75
 SAINT LEGER..... I 75 | TO-DAY I 75
 ROMANCE OF STUDENT LIFE..... I 75 | EMILIE. (In press.).....

Author "New Gospel of Peace,"

CHRONICLES OF GOTHAM.—A rich modern satire. (Paper covers).25 cts.
 THE FAL I OF MAN.—A satire on the Darwin theory. Do.50 cts.

Celia E. Gardner's Novels.

STOLEN WATERS (in verse).....\$1 50 | TESTED.....(in prose).....\$1 75
 BROKEN DREAMS do. I 50 | RICH MEDWAY....do..... I 75

Ann S. Stephens.

PHÉMIE FROST'S EXPERIENCES.—Author of "Fashion and Famine".....\$1 75

Anna Cora Mowatt.

ITALIAN LIFE AND LEGENDS.....\$1 50 | THE CLERGYMAN'S WIFE —A novel.....\$1 75

Mrs. C. L. McIlvain.

EBON AND GOLD.—A new American novel.....\$1 50

Dr. Cummings's Works.

THE GREAT TRIBULATION.....\$2 00 | THE GREAT CONSUMMATION.....\$2 00

THE GREAT PREPARATION.....2 00 | THE SEVENTH VIAL.....2 00

Cecelia Cleveland.

THE STORY OF A SUMMER; OR, JOURNAL LEAVES FROM CHAPPAQUA.....\$1 50

Olive Logan.

WOMEN AND THEATRES.—And other miscellaneous sketches and topics.....\$1 50

Miscellaneous Works.

TALES FROM THE OPERAS.....\$1 50 | NORTHERN BALLADS.—Anderson...\$1 50

FIELDAZZLE'S BACHELOR STUDIES.. 1 50 | PLYMOUTH CHURCH.—1847 to 1873. 2 00

LITTLE WANDERERS.—Illustrated.. 1 50 | O. C. KERR PAPERS.—4 vols. in 1... 2 00

GENESIS DISCLOSED.—T. A. Davies 1 50 | CHRISTMAS HOLLY—Marion Harland 1 50

COMMODORE ROLLINGPIN'S LOG.... 1 50 | DREAM MUSIC.—F. R. Marvin... 1 50

BRAZEN GATES.—A juvenile 1 50 | POEMS.—By L. G. Thomas..... 1 50

ANTIDOTE TO GATES AJAR25 cts | VICTOR HUGO.—His life..... 2 00

THE RUSSIAN BALL (paper).....25 cts | BEAUTY IS POWER..... 1 50

THE SNOBLACE BALL do25 cts | WOMAN, LOVE, AND MARRIAGE . . 1 50

DEAFNESS.—Dr. E. B. Lighthill... 1 00 | WICKEDEST WOMAN in New York..25 cts

A BOOK ABOUT LAWYERS..... 2 00 | SANDWICHES.—By Artemus Ward.25 cts

A BOOK ABOUT DOCTORS..... 2 00 | REGINA.—Poems by Eliza Cruger.. 1 50

SQUIBOB PAPERS.—John Phoenix .. 1 50 | WIDOW SPRIGGINS.—Widow Bedott 1 75

Miscellaneous Novels.

A CHARMING WIDOW.—Macquoid..\$1 75 | ROBERT GREATHOUSE.—J. F. Swift \$2 00

TRUE TO HIM EVER.—By F. W. R. 1 50 | FAUSTINA.—From the German.... 1 50

THE FORGIVING KISS.—By M. Loth. 1 75 | MAURICE.—From the French..... 1 50

LOYAL UNTO DEATH..... 1 75 | GUSTAV ADOLF.—From the Swedish 1 50

BESSIE WILMERTON.—Westcott... 1 75 | ADRIFT WITH A VENGEANCE..... 1 50

PURPLE AND FINE LINEN.—Fawcett. 1 75 | UP BROADWAY.—By Eleanor Kirk. 1 50

EDMUND DAWN.—By Ravenswood. 1 50 | MONTALBAN..... 1 75

CACHET.—Mrs. M. J. R. Hamilton, 1 75 | LIFE AND DEATH..... 1 50

MARK GILDERSLEEVE.—J. S. Sauzade 1 75 | CLAUDE GUEUX.—By Victor Hugo. 1 50

FERNANDO DE LEMOS.—C. Gayaree 2 00 | FOUR OAKS.—By Kamba Thorpe.. 1 75

CROWN JEWELS.—Mrs. Moffat. 1 75 | ADRIFT IN DIXIE.—Edmund Kirke. 1 50

A LOST LIFE.—By Emily Moore... 1 50 | AMONG THE GUERILLAS. Do. . 1 50

EVERY GLIBUN.—Orpheus C. Kerr. 2 00 | AMONG THE PINES Do. . 1 50

THE CLOVEN FOOT.—Do. . 1 50 | MY SOUTHERN FRIENDS. Do. . 1 50

ROMANCE OF RAILROAD.—Smith... 1 50 | DOWN IN TENNESSEE. Do. . 1 50

Miscellaneous Works.

WOOD'S GUIDE TO THE CITY OF NEW YORK.—Beautifully and fully illustrated..\$1 00

BILL ARP'S PEACE PAPERS.—Full of comic illustrations..... 1 50

A BOOK OF EPITAPHS.—Amusing, quaint, and curious. (New)..... 1 50

SOUVENIRS OF TRAVEL.—By Madame Octavia Walton LeVert..... 2 00

THE ART OF AMUSING.—A book of home amusements, with illustrations..... 1 50

HOW TO MAKE MONEY; and how to keep it.—By Thomas A. Davies..... 1 50

BALLAD OF LORD BATEMAN.—With illustrations by Cruikshank (paper).....25 cts

BEHIND THE SCENES; at the "White House."—By Elizabeth Keckley..... 2 00

THE YACHTSMAN'S PRIMER.—For amateur sailors. T. R. Warren (paper)....50 cts

RURAL ARCHITECTURE.—By M. Field. With plans and illustrations..... 2 00

LIFE OF HORACE GREELEY.—By L. U. Reavis. With a new steel Portrait. .. 2 00

WHAT I KNOW OF FARMING.—By Horace Greeley..... 1 50

PRACTICAL TREATISE ON LABOR.—By Hendrick B. Wright..... 2 00

TWELVE VIEWS OF HEAVEN.—By Twelve Distinguished English Divines..... 1 50

HOUSES NOT MADE WITH HANDS.—An illustrated juvenile, illustr'd by Hoppin. 1 00

CRUISE OF THE SHENANDOAH—The Last Confederate Steamer..... 1 50

MILITARY RECORD OF CIVILIAN APPOINTMENTS in the U. S. Army 5 00

IMPENDING CRISIS OF THE SOUTH.—By Hinton Rowan Helper..... 2 00

NEGROES IN NEGROLAND Do. Do. Do. (paper covers).. 1 00

CHARLES DICKENS' WORKS.

A New Edition.

Among the numerous editions of the works of this greatest of English Novelists, there has not been until now *one* that entirely satisfies the public demand. . . . Without exception, they each have some strong distinctive objection, . . . either the shape and dimensions of the volumes are unhandy—or, the type is small and indistinct—or, the paper is thin and poor—or, the illustrations [if they have any] are unsatisfactory—or, the binding is bad—or, the price is too high.

A new edition is *now*, however, published by G. W. Carleton & Co. of New York, which, it is believed, will, in every respect, completely satisfy the popular demand. . . . It is known as

"Carleton's New Illustrated Edition."

The size and form is most convenient for holding, . . . the type is entirely new, and of a clear and open character that has received the approval of the reading community in other popular works.

The illustrations are by the original artists chosen by Charles Dickens himself . . . and the paper, printing, and binding are of the most attractive and substantial character.

The publication of this beautiful new edition was commenced in April, 1873, and will be completed in 20 volumes—one novel each month—at the extremely reasonable price of \$1.50 per volume, as follows:—

1—THE PICKWICK PAPERS.
2—OLIVER TWIST.
3—DAVID COPPERFIELD.
4—GREAT EXPECTATIONS.
5—DOMBEY AND SON.
6—BARNABY RUDGE.
7—NICHOLAS NICKLEBY
8—OLD CURIOSITY SHOP.
9—BLEAK HOUSE.
10—LITTLE DORRIT.

11—MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT.
12—OUR MUTUAL FRIEND.
13—TALE OF TWO CITIES.
14—CHRISTMAS BOOKS.
15—SKETCHES BY "BOZ."
16—HARD TIMES, ETC.
17—PICTURES OF ITALY, ETC.
18—UNCOMMERCIAL TRAVELLER.
19—EDWIN DROOD, ETC.
20—ENGLAND and CATALOGUE.

Being issued, month by month, at so reasonable a price, those who *begin* by subscribing for this work, will imperceptibly soon find themselves fortunate owners of an entire set of this *best edition of Dickens' Works*, almost without having paid for it.

A Prospectus furnishing specimen of type, sized-page, and illustrations, will be sent to any one *free* on application—and specimen copies of the bound books will be forwarded by mail, *postage free*, on receipt of price, \$1.50, by

G. W. CARLETON & Co., Publishers,

Madison Square, New York.

THREE VALUABLE BOOKS,

All Beautifully Printed and Elegantly Bound.

I.—The Art of Conversation,

With Directions for Self-Culture. An admirably conceived and entertaining work—sensible, instructive, and full of suggestions valuable to every one who desires to be either a good talker or listener, or who wishes to appear to advantage in good society. Every young and even old person should read it, study it over and over again, and follow those hints in it which lead them to break up bad habits and cultivate good ones. ** Price \$1.50. Among the contents will be found chapters upon—

ATTENTION IN CONVERSATION.—SATIRE.—PUNS.—SARCASM.—TEASING.—CENSURE.—FAULT-FINDING.—EGOTISM.—POLITENESS.—COMPLIMENTS.—STORIES.—ANECDOTES.—QUESTIONING.—LIBERTIES.—IMPUDENCE.—STARING.—DISAGREEABLE SUBJECTS.—SEL-

FISHNESS.—ARGUMENT.—SACRIFICES.—SILENT PEOPLE.—DINNER CONVERSATION.—TIMIDITY.—ITS CURE.—MODESTY.—CORRECT LANGUAGE.—SELF-INSTRUCTION.—MISCELLANEOUS KNOWLEDGE.—LANGUAGES.

II.—The Habits of Good Society.

A Handbook for Ladies and Gentlemen. With thoughts, hints, and anecdotes concerning social observances, nice points of taste and good manners, and the art of making oneself agreeable. The whole interspersed with humorous illustrations of social predicaments, remarks on fashion, etc. ** Price \$1.75. Among the contents will be found chapters upon—

GENTLEMEN'S PREFACE.
LADIES' PREFACE.—FASHIONS.
THOUGHTS ON SOCIETY.
GOOD SOCIETY.—BAD SOCIETY.
THE DRESSING-ROOM.
THE LADIES' TOILET.—DRESS.
FEMININE ACCOMPLISHMENTS.
MANNERS AND HABITS.
PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ETIQUETTE.
MARRIED AND UNMARRIED LADIES.
DO DO GENTLEMEN.
CALLING ETIQUETTE.—CARDS.
VISITING ETIQUETTE.—DINNERS.
DINNER PARTIES.

LADIES AT DINNER.
DINNER HABITS.—CARVING.
MANNERS AT SUPPER.—BALLS.
MORNING PARTIES.—PICNICS.
EVENING PARTIES.—DANCES.
PRIVATE THEATRICALS.
RECEPTIONS.—ENGAGEMENTS.
MARRIAGE CEREMONIES.
INVITATIONS.—DRESSES.
BRIDESMAIDS.—PRESENTS.
TRAVELLING ETIQUETTE.
PUBLIC PROMENADE.
COUNTRY VISITS.—CITY VISITS.

III.—Arts of Writing, Reading, and Speaking.

An exceedingly fascinating work for teaching not only the beginner, but for perfecting every one in these three most desirable accomplishments. For youth this book is both interesting and valuable; and for adults, whether professionally or socially, it is a book that they cannot dispense with. ** Price \$1.50. Among the contents will be found chapters upon—

READING & THINKING.—LANGUAGE.—WORDS, SENTENCES, & CONSTRUCTION.
WHAT TO AVOID.—LETTER WRITING.—PRONUNCIATION.—EXPRESSION.—TONE
RELIGIOUS READINGS.—THE BIBLE.—PRAYERS.—DRAMATIC READINGS.—THE ACTOR & READER.—FOUNDATIONS FOR ORATORY AND SPEAKING.—WHAT TO

SAY.—WHAT NOT TO SAY.—HOW TO BEGIN.—CAUTIONS.—DELIVERY.—WRITING A SPEECH.—FIRST LESSONS.—PUBLIC SPEAKING.—DELIVERY.—ACTION.
ORATORY OF THE PULPIT.—COMPOSITION.—THE BAR.—READING OF WIT & HUMOR.—THE PLATFORM.—CONSTRUCTION OF A SPEECH.

These works are the most perfect of their kind ever published; fresh, sensible good-humored entertaining, and readable. Every person of taste should possess them, and cannot be otherwise than delighted with them.

A beautiful new miniature edition of these very popular books has just been published, entitled "THE DIAMOND EDITION," three little volumes, elegantly printed on tinted paper, and handsomely bound in a box. Price \$3.00.

** These books are all sent by mail, postage free, on receipt of price, by

G. W. CARLETON & CO., Publishers, Madison Square, New York.

POPULAR FRENCH NOVELS.

Uniform with this Volume, and by the same
Translator.

I.—SHE LOVED HIM MADLY; *or*, "*Le
Beau Roland.*" By GONTRAN BORYS.

II.—SO FAIR, YET FALSE; *or*, "*Pour-
quoi?*" By EUGENE CHAVETTE.

III.—A FATAL PASSION; *or*, "*Gerfaut.*"
By CHARLES DE BERNARD.

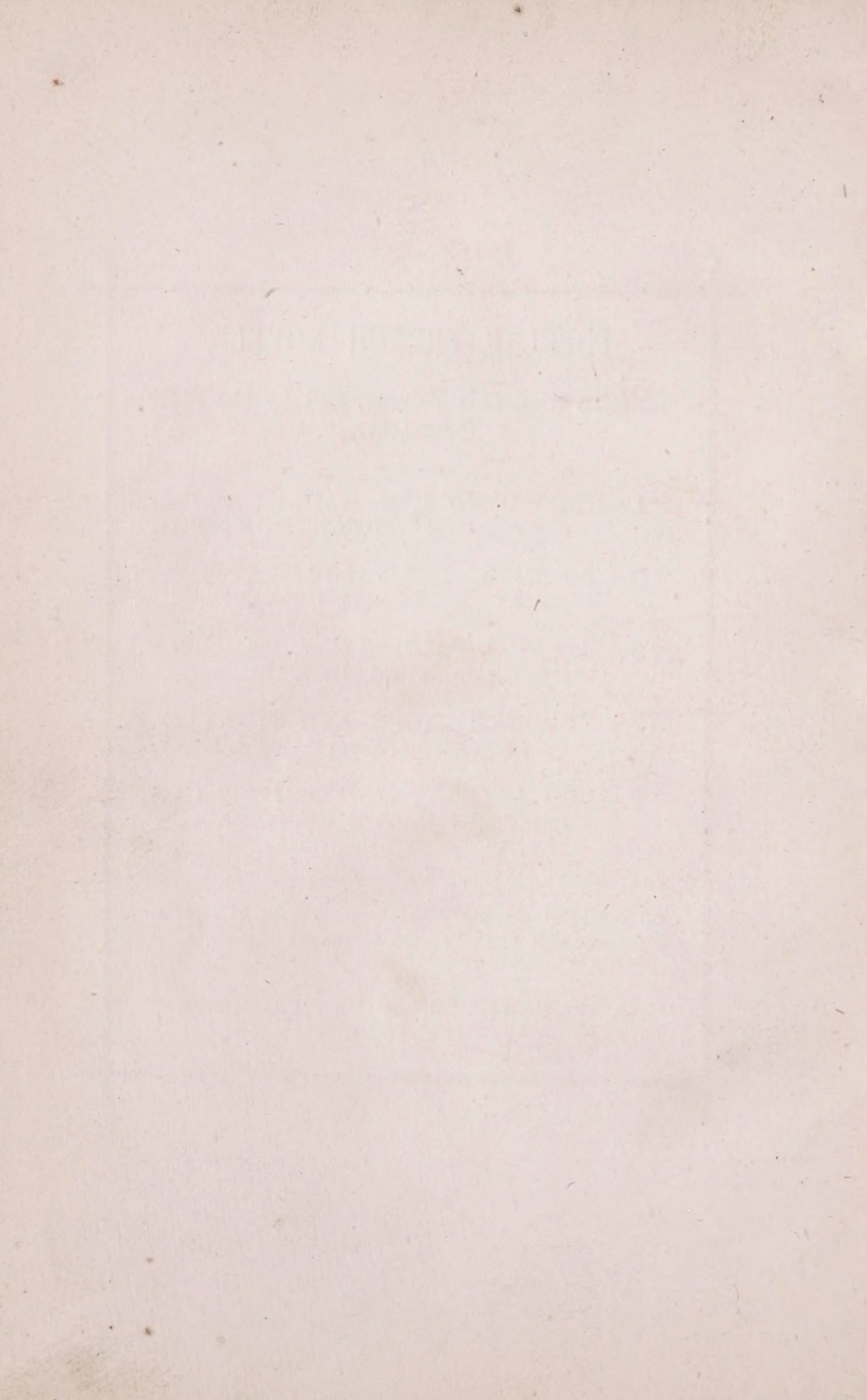
IV.—THROUGH THICK AND THIN; *or*,
"*La Guerre du Nizam.*" By J. MERY.

V.—LED ASTRAY; *or*, "*La Petite Com-
tesse.*" By OCTAVE FEUILLET.

All published uniform with this volume, at \$1.75 each,
and sent FREE by mail, on receipt of price,

BY

G. W. CARLETON & CO., Publishers,
NEW YORK.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00022161477

